# Met Police deny allegations of brutality amid protests at DSEI arms fair



The Metropolitan Police have firmly denied allegations of aggressive behaviour by officers during protests at this week's Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair held at the ExCel centre in Newham, London. The four-day event, attracting military buyers and defence contractors from across the globe, was met with sizeable demonstrations, particularly focused on the participation of over 50 Israeli arms firms despite a UK government ban on Israeli officials.

Footage circulating from the opening day showed physical confrontations between police and protesters, prompting criticism from figures such as Green Party London Assembly Members Zoë Garbett and Caroline Russell. Garbett described police actions as a "disgrace," highlighting aggressive tactics that resulted in injuries and the removal of at least one protester on a stretcher. She contextualised this as part of a broader pattern of increased policing and a clampdown on dissent. These concerns resonate with longstanding criticisms of the Met’s approach to protests, notably the controversial policing and heightened security costs observed during prior DSEI events, with campaigners in 2019 decrying what they called an “increasingly authoritarian” stance that saw a doubling of police presence and over 120 arrests.

Caroline Russell also condemned the arms fair for allowing the display of weapons linked to global suffering, including components of cluster munitions banned under international law. Green Party MP Sian Berry echoed these points, expressing outrage at the public exhibition of such weapons and asserting that they should never be traded in the UK. The Campaign Against Arms Trade intensified the controversy by filing a criminal complaint with the Met Police War Crimes Unit, accusing individuals at the fair of facilitating war crimes in Gaza by profiting from arms sales linked to severe humanitarian impacts such as hospital bombings and civilian deaths.

The Met Police spokesperson reported three arrests during the DSEI protests, all related to assaults on officers, with none of the officers sustaining serious injuries. This official account contrasts with the protesters' depiction of police tactics and feeds into wider public scrutiny of the Met’s conduct. The force has been at the centre of multiple allegations concerning internal culture and policing practices in recent years. Investigations by the Independent Office for Police Conduct have previously revealed disturbing patterns of misogyny, discrimination, bullying, and sexual harassment within the force. Moreover, tens of thousands of complaints against officers have been recorded, covering a broad spectrum from racism to excessive use of force, with the Met acknowledging the need to root out corruption and improve conduct standards.

The wider social and political context adds further layers to the narrative. The Met has also faced criticism related to political pressures and handling of protests in London, including the organisation of pro-Palestinian demonstrations where violent clashes and hate crimes emerged as contentious issues. A governmental report found that political interference had improperly influenced police decisions, underscoring the challenges the Met encounters in balancing public order, political sensitivities, and rights to protest.

The ongoing controversy surrounding the DSEI arms fair and the Met Police's response reflects deeper and complex debates about accountability, policing standards, and the legitimacy of public protest in London. While the Met insists on the necessity of their policing measures and the propriety of their officers’ conduct, activists demand greater transparency and restraint, especially in the face of events linked to global conflict and human rights concerns.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/zone-1-news/met-police-reject-accusations-aggressive-32467667), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/14/police-heavy-handed-on-peaceful-protest-say-arms-fair-campaigners)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/zone-1-news/met-police-reject-accusations-aggressive-32467667), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/14/police-heavy-handed-on-peaceful-protest-say-arms-fair-campaigners)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/zone-1-news/met-police-reject-accusations-aggressive-32467667), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/14/police-heavy-handed-on-peaceful-protest-say-arms-fair-campaigners), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-64453761)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/zone-1-news/met-police-reject-accusations-aggressive-32467667), [[5]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-64453761), [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-60215575.amp)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.mylondon.news/news/zone-1-news/met-police-reject-accusations-aggressive-32467667), [[6]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67390514.amp), [[7]](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0l83w0x359o.amp)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.mylondon.news/news/zone-1-news/met-police-reject-accusations-aggressive-32467667> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/nov/14/police-heavy-handed-on-peaceful-protest-say-arms-fair-campaigners> - In 2019, the Metropolitan Police faced criticism for its handling of protests during the Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair in London. Campaigners accused the police of an 'increasingly authoritarian' approach, highlighting the doubling of policing costs to £2.4 million and the deployment of 5,609 officers, up from 2,810 in 2017. Over 120 protesters were arrested during the event, raising concerns about the force's response to peaceful demonstrations. The increased presence and costs sparked debates about the balance between security measures and the right to protest.
3. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c749j7gnmpeo> - Victims of police misconduct have expressed feelings of being ignored by forces for decades. One woman recounted being 'kicked and punched black and blue' by her ex-partner, a policeman at the time, with other officers witnessing the incident and taking no action. The victims commissioner for England and Wales highlighted that many victims feel 'ignored or fobbed off' by police forces. The Home Office acknowledged the need for urgent improvement in standards and pledged to introduce mandatory professional standards on vetting and misconduct.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-60215575.amp> - An Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) report uncovered 'disgraceful' levels of misogyny, discrimination, bullying, and sexual harassment within the Metropolitan Police. Officers were found to have exchanged offensive messages, including jokes about rape and other inappropriate content, often defended as 'banter'. The IOPC emphasized that such behaviour was not isolated and called for significant cultural changes within the force. The Met Police expressed deep regret over the findings and committed to addressing the issues raised.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-64453761> - In 2022, nearly 15,000 allegations were made against Metropolitan Police officers and staff, encompassing racism, harassment, sexism, homophobia, sexual assault, and excessive use of force. The data, derived from over 10,000 complaints, revealed that 60% of allegations pertained to the 'delivery of duties and service'. The Met Police acknowledged the 'vast majority' of complaints related to low-level conduct but emphasized their determination to root out corruption within the force.
6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-67390514.amp> - The Metropolitan Police condemned 'extreme violence from right-wing protesters' who confronted a pro-Palestinian march in London. Nine officers were injured, and 145 people were arrested, with the majority being counter-protesters. While the pro-Palestinian march itself remained largely peaceful, serious offences related to antisemitic hate crimes were under investigation. The Prime Minister condemned the violent actions of a minority of individuals, emphasizing the importance of peaceful expression of views.
7. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0l83w0x359o.amp> - A report by His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) found that former Home Secretary Suella Braverman was wrong to publicly criticise the Metropolitan Police over its handling of pro-Palestinian marches. The report highlighted instances of 'improper' political interference, including pressure from Braverman to ban a march planned for Armistice Day. The Met Police had no legal powers to ban the march due to a lack of intelligence indicating any risks, and the report suggested that such criticisms should have been made privately if deemed appropriate.