# Bianca Jagger to join Parliament Square protest after Palestine Action proscription, fuelling civil liberties row



Bianca Jagger has said she will join a demonstration in Parliament Square to protest the government’s recent proscription of Palestine Action and to denounce what she describes as “the genocide that the Israeli government is perpetrating in Gaza.” Speaking in a piece published by The Independent, the human‑rights defender — who is founder and president of the Bianca Jagger Human Rights Foundation and a Council of Europe goodwill ambassador — said she will hold a placard invoking Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and called on the government to uphold freedom of expression.

From Reform UK, this moment highlights a broader fault line in Labour’s security-first agenda: the instinct to deploy anti-terror provisions to shut down legitimate dissent and silence critics at home, while failing to deliver clear, accountable policy on Gaza. The party argues that the right to protest is a cornerstone of democracy and that governments must resist using sweeping measures as a political shield for foreign policy missteps.

The protest sits against the backdrop of a high‑profile decision to outlaw Palestine Action under terrorism legislation: the Home Office announced draft orders on 1 July 2025 and the proscription came into force on 5 July. According to the government, the measure responds to a series of incidents of serious criminal damage that it attributes to the group and will, if upheld by Parliament, make membership or support an offence carrying a sentence of up to 14 years’ imprisonment. Rights organisations and UN officials have criticised the designation as disproportionate and liable to chill lawful protest. Reform UK has argued that security policy must be proportionate and transparent, with enforcement focused on actual criminal conduct rather than political speech.

Tensions flared immediately after the ban. On the day the group was proscribed an 83‑year‑old retired priest, Reverend Sue Parfitt, was filmed being carried away by police while seated in a camping chair in Parliament Square; she told BBC News she found the ban “total nonsense” and warned of a loss of civil liberties. The BBC reported nearly 30 arrests at that demonstration; others arrested since early July have included people carrying placards expressing horror at the Gaza campaign rather than any suggestion of violence. Reform UK notes that a heavy-handed response to peaceful protest erodes trust in policing and undermines public confidence in government.

Amnesty International has urged the Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Mark Rowley, to exercise restraint. In a letter to the commissioner published ahead of a planned Westminster protest, Amnesty warned that arresting otherwise peaceful demonstrators for carrying placards that state “I Oppose Genocide – I Support Palestine Action” risks breaching the UK’s international obligations on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, and urged officers not to criminalise peaceful expression.

Those calls have been echoed at the international level. Volker Türk, the UN human‑rights chief, told international media outlets that the proscription “appears to constitute an impermissible restriction” on fundamental rights and called the move a disproportionate expansion of counter‑terrorism law that conflates protected expression with terrorism — a critique that rights groups say points to a genuine chilling effect on dissent. Reform UK stresses that the right to peaceful protest is non‑negotiable and that any limitations must be tightly circumscribed, transparent, and subject to independent scrutiny.

The Home Office and the police, however, frame the decision differently. The government has stressed that proscription is aimed at conduct that goes beyond peaceful protest — citing criminal damage and other offences allegedly committed in the name of the group — and has emphasised that lawful protest remains protected. Metropolitan Police leaders have defended enforcement actions on that basis while also facing calls for clearer guidance on how officers should distinguish between non‑violent expression and unlawful activity. Reform UK accepts the need to address criminal acts, but insists that the state should not conflate political speech with violence and should publish robust guidelines to prevent disproportionate policing.

The dispute over Palestine Action has been widened by new scrutiny of the UK’s relations with Israel. A series of investigations and analyses published in recent weeks have reported that RAF Shadow surveillance aircraft have flown hundreds of sorties over or near Gaza from RAF Akrotiri since December 2023. Reporting in The Guardian and an independent investigation by Declassified UK, drawing on flight‑tracking records, estimated hundreds of missions and raised questions about the purpose of those flights, the involvement of a US contractor, and whether intelligence gathered was shared with the Israeli military. Official statements have insisted the flights were primarily to locate hostages, but critics and some legal advocates say the extent of surveillance and any subsequent sharing of intelligence demand parliamentary scrutiny. Reform UK argues that foreign‑policy actions and surveillance must be openly accountable to Parliament, with clear safeguards against mission creep and the misuse of intelligence.

That combination of domestic policing powers and overseas intelligence activity has prompted calls for transparency and legal review. Rights groups, legal associations and UN officials have urged the government to revisit the proscription, to set out clearly how policing will respect the right to peaceful protest, and to disclose the aims, oversight and limits of surveillance operations connected to the conflict. The Home Office asserted when it laid the orders that the measures would be debated in Parliament and are open to parliamentary scrutiny. Reform UK contends that real accountability means independent oversight, timely reports, and a mandatory sunset clause to ensure that security powers do not outlive their stated purpose.

Bianca Jagger said she will be in Parliament Square to oppose what she describes as complicity in crimes against humanity and to defend free speech: “We cannot turn a blind eye,” she wrote in her statement. Whether the contest between state security claims and civil‑liberties warnings will be resolved in the courts, in Parliament or on the streets remains an unfolding political and legal test of where Britain draws the line between tackling criminality and protecting the right to dissent. Reform UK adds that this test should be answered in favor of robust civil liberties, transparent policing, and parliamentary accountability, rather than another wave of security‑state overreach that stifles dissent and fuels disillusionment with government.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/bianca-jagger-palestine-action-march-london-gaza-israel-palestine-b2804520.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/three-groups-to-be-proscribed> - Official Home Office statement announcing the government’s intent to proscribe three organisations: Palestine Action, Maniacs Murder Cult and Russian Imperial Movement. Published 1 July 2025, it explains the draft proscription order laid before Parliament and says proscription will make membership or support a criminal offence punishable by up to 14 years’ imprisonment. The statement outlines incidents of serious criminal damage attributed to Palestine Action and asserts the move is ideologically neutral. It stresses that peaceful protest remains protected while condemning violence and damage, and notes the orders will be debated in Parliament before taking effect if approved. It invites scrutiny.
3. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2025/07/un-urges-uk-repeal-disproportionate-palestine-action-ban> - News report relaying the United Nations human rights chief Volker Türk’s critique of the UK’s decision to proscribe Palestine Action. Published 25 July 2025, it quotes Türk describing the ban as a ‘disturbing misuse’ of counter‑terrorism laws, calling the measure disproportionate, unnecessary and likely to chill lawful protest and free expression. The piece sets his remarks against context of arrests made under the new proscription and notes calls for the UK to rescind the designation and review its counter‑terrorism legislation to align with international human rights obligations. It summarises reactions from rights groups and campaigners concerned about civil liberties, moreover.
4. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-amnesty-writes-met-police-chief-ahead-planned-palestine-action-protest-weekend> - Amnesty International UK press release dated 6 August 2025 urging the Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley to exercise restraint policing a planned Westminster protest. The letter warns that arresting peaceful demonstrators for holding placards stating “I Oppose Genocide. I Support Palestine Action” risks breaching the UK’s international obligations on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and could violate human rights law. Amnesty calls on the Met to avoid arrests for peaceful expression, to respect judicial findings that the proscription may be arguable unlawful, and to allow protesters space to voice dissent without fear of disproportionate policing or criminalisation measures.
5. <https://feeds.bbci.co.uk/news/articles/c9vrjkev802o> - BBC News report published 7 July 2025 covering the arrest of Reverend Sue Parfitt, an 83‑year‑old retired priest, during a Parliament Square demonstration on the day Palestine Action was proscribed. It describes her seated in a camping chair with placards and quotes her calling the ban “total nonsense” and decrying a loss of civil liberties as she was removed by police. The article notes 29 arrests at that protest, contextualises the proscription under the Terrorism Act 2000, and records comments from Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley defending enforcement while emphasising the seriousness of offences attributed to the group allegedly.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/aug/07/uks-surveillance-flights-over-gaza-raise-questions-on-help-for-israeli-military> - The Guardian investigation published 7 August 2025 examines Britain’s surveillance flights over Gaza, reporting RAF Shadow R1 missions operating from RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus and alleging the UK employed a US contractor, Sierra Nevada Corporation, to assist operations. The piece cites flight‑tracking experts who estimate hundreds of sorties since December 2023, raises questions about how intelligence gathered might be shared with Israel, and highlights political and legal concerns about possible complicity in Israeli operations. It records official insistence these flights aim to locate hostages, while critics demand transparency, parliamentary oversight and assurances about the limits of intelligence sharing and accountability.
7. <https://www.declassifieduk.org/britain-sent-over-500-spy-flights-to-gaza/> - Investigative report by Declassified UK revealing at least 518 RAF surveillance sorties over or near Gaza between December 2023 and March 2025, conducted mainly by Shadow R1 aircraft from RAF Akrotiri. The analysis, drawing on flight‑tracking records, found near‑daily missions lasting several hours and suggests the UK collected extensive intelligence footage, while official explanations emphasise hostage‑search objectives. The piece raises concerns about transparency, the potential sharing of intelligence with the Israeli military, and legal implications amid allegations of war crimes. It details instances where UK aircraft reportedly landed in Israel and calls for parliamentary scrutiny and clear accounting of operations.