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Item 6(a)

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Dear Susan,

Thank you for your letter of 10 October to the Home Secretary on behalf of Glasgow council about the proscription of Palestine Action. I am replying as the Security Minister.

The strength of feeling across Britain about the intolerable scenes of suffering and devastation in Gaza is palpable, and public protests are a vital call for action to end them. That is why, for the last 18 months, pro-Palestinian rallies have taken place on an almost weekly basis in central London and other parts of the country. There are many lawful ways to support Palestinian rights and sovereignty without being a member or supporter of this harmful organisation. In a democracy, lawful protest is a fundamental right, but violent criminality is not. No one should let the urgent and desperate calls for peace in the Middle East to be diverted or derailed into a campaign for one narrow group involved in violence here, in the UK.

The proscription of this group is not about protest or the Palestinian cause. The right to peaceful protest is a cornerstone of our democracy. It is a freedom that we protect fiercely and always will. We must not conflate Palestine Action's activity with legitimate pro-Palestinian support. Anyone who wants to protest against the catastrophic humanitarian situation and crimes against humanity in Gaza, to oppose Israel's military offensive, or to criticise the actions of any and every government, including our own, has the freedom to do so. Those who want to oppose the proscription of this group can do so freely and lawfully – that is not itself an offence. It is an offence when protest is focused on showing support for an organisation that has been proscribed.

The use of police powers and the management of protests are matters for the police, who are operationally independent from government. It would therefore not be appropriate for me to comment on this. However, I can confirm that frontline officers routinely receive public order briefings, including information on proscribed organisations, in advance of public demonstrations and protests to ensure that they can facilitate lawful protest while also enforcing, where necessary, proscription offences.

The normalisation of support for a proscribed terrorist organisation is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. One of Palestine Action's founders, along with other campaign groups, has made no secret of their desire to overwhelm the criminal justice system and make Palestine Action's proscription unenforceable. This is the same tactic that Palestine

Action has used to try and intimidate businesses that are legitimately involved in our defence industry. The Government will not be bullied or intimidated.

Under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Home Secretary may proscribe an organisation if she believes it is concerned in terrorism, and it is proportionate to do so. An organisation may be concerned in terrorism if it commits or participates in terrorism, prepares for terrorism, promotes or encourages terrorism, or is otherwise concerned in terrorism.

Palestine Action's activities have met the thresholds established in the Terrorism Act 2000. The organisation has conducted an escalating campaign involving not just sustained criminal damage, including to Britain's national security infrastructure, but also intimidation and, more recently, alleged violence, including the use of weapons resulting in serious injuries to individuals. That kind of activity puts the safety and security of the public at risk. Palestine Action has claimed responsibility for attacks which have seen those allegedly involved charged with criminal damage, violent disorder, aggravated burglary, grievous bodily harm with intent, and actual bodily harm. The gravity of these incidents is demonstrated by the Crown Prosecution Service's independent decision to submit to the court that the offences allegedly committed by individuals in certain attacks had a terrorism connection.

The extent of damage across three attacks at Thales in Glasgow in 2022 and at Instro Precision in Kent and Elbit Systems in Bristol in 2024 alone runs into the millions of pounds. In the Sheriff's sentencing remarks concerning the attack in Glasgow, it was noted that "throwing pyrotechnics into areas where people are being evacuated could hardly be described as non-violent". The Sheriff further recorded the extent of damage to legitimate business activities which included "matters of national security".

Some may think Palestine Action are a regular protest group known for occasional stunts. But that is not the extent of this group's past activities. Nor does it reflect disturbing information referencing ideas for future attacks, the details of which cannot yet be publicly reported. We would not tolerate this activity from organisations motivated by Islamist or extreme right-wing ideology. We cannot tolerate it from Palestine Action.

Decisions on proscription are not taken lightly and are informed by a robust evidence-based process. The intelligence and advice from the UK's world leading counter-terrorism system was clear – for a Home Secretary to ignore all those assessments and advice would be irresponsible.

The first duty of government is to keep our country safe; and it is right that we are able to take action against those who engage in activity that threatens our national security.

I trust this clarifies the Government's position.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Jarvis MBE MP
Security Minister
Cabinet Office and Home Office