

Funding the Future

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This is from [George Monbiot in The Guardian](#) this morning and is too important not to share:

The [public order bill](#) is the kind of legislation you might expect to see in Russia, Iran or Egypt. Illegal protest is defined by the bill as acts causing “serious disruption to two or more individuals, or to an organisation”. Given that the Police Act redefined “serious disruption” to [include noise](#), this means, in effect, all meaningful protest.

For locking or glueing yourself to another protester, or to the railings or any other object, you can be sentenced to 51 weeks in prison - in other words, [twice the maximum sentence](#) for common assault. Sitting in the road, or obstructing fracking machinery, pipelines and other oil and gas infrastructure, airports or printing presses (Rupert says thanks) can get you a year. For digging a tunnel as part of a protest, you can be sent down for three years.

Even more sinister are the “serious disruption prevention orders” in the bill. Anyone who has taken part in a protest in England or Wales in the previous five years, whether or not they have been convicted of an offence, can be served with a two-year order forbidding them from attending further protests. Like prisoners on probation, they may be required to report to “a particular person at a particular place at ... particular times on particular days”, “to remain at a particular place for particular periods” and to submit to wearing an electronic tag. They may not associate “with particular persons”, enter “particular areas” or use the internet to encourage other people to protest. If you break these terms, you face up to 51 weeks in prison. So much for “civilised” and “democratic”.

Who are the criminals here? Those seeking to prevent the vandalism of the living planet, or those facilitating it?

Effectively this means that if I want to continue to write I must not protest, ever, however heinous the issues we face in our society.

My freedom feels very constrained today.