

The government should stop wasting time on gesture poli...

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As The National newspaper in Scotland [has reported](#):

Amnesty have condemned the [UK Government](#)'s plan to expand police powers to ban protests, calling the "ludicrous proposal" a rehash of measures previously ruled unlawful.

It comes in response to Sunday's announcement with police set to be given greater powers to restrict protests by allowing them to consider the "cumulative impact" of repeated demonstrations.

The measures follow frequent pro-Palestinian demonstrations, including an event in London on Saturday which saw almost 500 arrests.

They added:

Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said repeated large-scale protests had caused "considerable fear" for the Jewish community.

They then noted:

The UK Government intends to amend Sections 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 to explicitly allow the police to take account of the cumulative impact of frequent protests on local areas, to impose conditions on public processions and assemblies.

The Home Secretary will also review existing legislation to ensure powers are sufficient and are being applied consistently by police forces – this will include powers to ban protests outright.

However, the UK government has [previously proposed amendments](#) to Sections 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986, [spearheaded by Suella Braverman in 2023](#).

Some obvious thoughts follow. First, there was shocking reporting about the Defend

Our Juries protest this weekend, and about other protests relating to Palestine, which many Jewish people attend because they share the horror of others at the actions of the Israeli government. Despite the claims made by politicians, including ministers, and also some journalists, there is nothing antisemitic about these protests. They are aimed at those people in Israel who are commanding the forces committing genocide in Gaza, contrary to a wide range of international laws, as a result of which those issuing these commands and many of those acting on them are almost certainly guilty of war crimes.

Second, I am not disputing that what happened in Manchester was horrific and unjustified in a great many ways. But there is no evidence of any sort that it was organised. All the signs are that a lone individual did it. There has been a massive outcry, and significantly greater protection for the Jewish community as a result, because it was described as a terrorist event, but that is a label that needs to be used evenhandedly.

I say that because if this was the appropriate description, then the attack on a Mosque in Peacehaven yesterday was worthy of the same description. But as the [BBC noted](#):

Police investigating a report of suspected arson at a mosque in East Sussex have issued images of two people they wish to identify.

Fire crews were called to the mosque on Phyllis Avenue in Peacehaven at about 21:50 BST on Saturday.

While no-one was injured in the incident, the front entrance of the building and a vehicle parked outside were damaged according to Sussex Police, who are investigating it as a hate crime.

Det Insp Gavin Patch said: "This was an appalling and reckless attack which we know will have left many people feeling less safe."

"We are treating this as an arson with intent to endanger life and are continuing to pursue a number of lines of enquiry to identify those responsible," added Det Insp Patch.

So, this attack, which was obviously racially motivated, and looks just as likely to be terrorism-related as the attack on the Jewish synagogue, and could have been as serious, with similar impact in terms of fear for the community involved which, it should be noted, is larger across the UK, was treated as arson and a hate crime, but apparently not as terrorism. It is being consigned to a footnote.

Three things follow.

First, why the different treatments? They are unjustified. Fear is fear, just as

discrimination is discrimination, whoever suffers it, except, it seems, in the eyes of the UK government. This is unjustifiable. And before anyone gets upset about me saying so, asking for equal treatment is not showing prejudice.

Second, the demonstrations taking place are not in any reasonable way a basis for people to suffer fear. This makes no sense at all. That is the last thing they are promoting. And nor are they promoting Hamas, as I have heard some journalists claim. They are demanding an end to illegal Israeli government actions, as many Jews do, [as I showed recently](#).

Thirdly, an anti-crackdown in demonstrations is just the desperate act of a government growing ever more desperate by the day that has made a complete fool of itself by proscribing Palestine Action. They can solve the problems that exist by ending their own stupid decision to proscribe an organisation dedicated to peaceful demonstration, which is a human right. It's time they tackled real issues and stopped wasting police time on gesture politics.