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# The Starmer regime is turning Britain into a police state

The UK's crackdown on protests against the Gaza genocide is the worst example of the authoritarian trend evident in Western Europe



By **Tarik Cyril Amar**, a historian from Germany working at Koç University, Istanbul, on Russia, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe, the history of World War II, the cultural Cold War, and the politics of memory

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FILE PHOTO. A Palestine Action activist is arrested by police officers in Manchester, UK, November 22, 2023. © Martin pope/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

The UK is witnessing the largest and most significant prison hunger strike since 1981. Since the beginning of November, a total of **eight activists** in pretrial detention for standing up against the **Gaza Genocide**, have been **protesting** against Israel's continuing mass murder, Britain's complicity, and their own abusive and petty treatment by, as it happens, the same infamous legal and incarceration system **that used to torture Julian Assange** on behalf of the US.

The hunger strikers' demands also include releasing documents showing how Britain's extremely powerful Israel Lobby has been **influencing** the government and an end to the absurd proscription of the activists' own

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The charges against the activists refer to [two cases](#): the break-in at a British branch of Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit Systems and infiltration of a Royal Air Force base to damage two planes with red paint and crowbars. Elbit is one of the many Israeli and multinational companies that are deeply involved in Israel's genocide in Gaza and its ceaseless other crimes elsewhere, as UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese has shown in her recent [report](#) *"From economy of occupation to economy of genocide."*

Britain's Royal Air Force has besmirched itself by flying reconnaissance missions over Gaza, supporting Israel and its genocide there. Official denials, [insisting](#) that these operations have exclusively served the rescuing of hostages, are *"preposterous,"* as Matt Kennard who has been tracking and analyzing the flights systematically [has concluded](#). In addition, since the flights are embedded in Israeli intelligence gathering, which is notorious for routinely relying on torture, the flights also make the UK an accomplice to [that specific crime](#).

Ages ago, as an undergraduate history student at Oxford, I could see with my own eyes the great, persisting pride still attached to the memory of Britain's 'finest hour,' when the country faced off against the threat of invasion by a surging Nazi Germany that had just mauled France. Over a thousand brave Spitfire pilots who fought in World War Two must now be turning in their graves. They defended their country against a fascist, genocidal German regime. Now the Royal Air Force is helping a Zionist, genocidal Israeli regime commit mass murder.

What an incredible shame. By now – very, very late – some former officers of high rank, and with a minimum of a conscience and a sense of honor left, are finally [raising their voices](#) to demand that Britain end its self-degrading support for and cooperation with Israel.

The core of terrorism for reasonable people, is the deliberate use of violence against civilians, usually on a large scale, to produce a climate of fear and insecurity in pursuit of political aims. That definition does not cover – by any stretch of the imagination – what Palestine Action has been doing. Treating its activists as the equivalent of Al Qaeda and ISIS operatives is ludicrous. Indeed, the normal definition of terrorism is a much better fit for Israel's behavior, which uses extreme violence against civilians in pursuit of a strategy of ethnic cleansing.

The hunger strike has faced official stone-walling, with Justice Secretary David Lammy quite literally [ducking away](#) from the participants' relatives. As always now in NATO Europe, the mainstream media have followed the government line [to the extent of almost maintaining a blackout](#). Physically exhausted [and at high risk of dying](#), some of the activists have recently suspended their hunger strike, [others are continuing](#). Meanwhile, they [have found public support](#) despite the severe risk of police-state repression by Prime Minister Keir Starmer's regime.

For the Starmer regime is engaged not 'merely' in viciously going after a few to make examples of them, even while risking their death in detention. Rather it is applying a strategy of mass repression. According to Amnesty International, 2,700 peaceful protesters [have been arrested](#) simply for daring to protest the banning of Palestine Action. This *"is a*

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*violation of the UK's international obligations [and] disproportionate to the point of absurdity,"* they point out.

Often, those arrested, including the elderly, infirm, and impaired, are picked up for holding up a sign. This is not even 'draconian,' it is vile. It is the opposite of fair play. Those British police officers executing these orders now will face their own children's questions of how they could stoop so low, if not now, then in a few years. No less than those Berlin police officers who have been impressing at beating up anti-genocide protesters. Mumbling *"just following orders"* and *"we didn't know any better"* won't be enough.

In addition, [critical journalists](#), a former [member of parliament](#), [NHS doctors](#), and others have been hounded by the same British police-state methods, using the pretext of anti-terrorism policing for political repression designed to cover the Starmer regime's complicity in Israel's genocide.

But now [a group of seven UN experts have called on](#) this regime to not only respect the *"fundamental rights"* and protect the very lives of the hunger strikers, but note that reports of ill-treatment *"raise serious questions about compliance with international human rights law and standards, including obligations to protect life and prevent cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment."*

The same experts have *"previously raised concerns with the UK Government regarding the application of counter-terrorism and security frameworks to acts of political protest that are not genuinely terrorist [...] and warned against the criminalization of conduct that falls within the protected exercise of the rights to freedom of assembly, association, and expression, and the suppression of legitimate political dissent, including advocacy related to Palestine."*

Inevitably, these UN experts *"have also expressed serious concern"* about the Starmer regime's bizarrely broad definition of terrorism, *"the proscription of Palestine Action [...] and the subsequent mass arrests and criminal charges, including terrorism-related offenses, brought against individuals for alleged support for Palestine Action."*

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Keir Starmer knows what he is doing. He prides himself on being a human rights lawyer by training, which is a perverse choice for a power-hungry man without a conscience. One who runs a de facto police and propaganda state, and once misinformed the British public that [Israel had a "right"](#) to impose on Gaza what he must have known amounted to a starvation siege. But it still means he is in a position to understand just how wrong he and his regime are. That is one reason this is not a mere 'scandal.' It's much worse. It's evil, in the old, absolute sense of the word.

Britain now has an evil regime, led by evil men and evil women, supported by corrupt mainstream media, all under the influence of an Israel Lobby that promotes the interests of a genocidal apartheid state.

The hunger strikers are a small, emblematic group of men and women who have done what, since the Holocaust, we have all been told to do if similar crimes ever happen again and our own government is committing them or complicit in them: resist as best we can. They represent a much larger number of decent and courageous British citizens who also resist and often pay a heavy price.

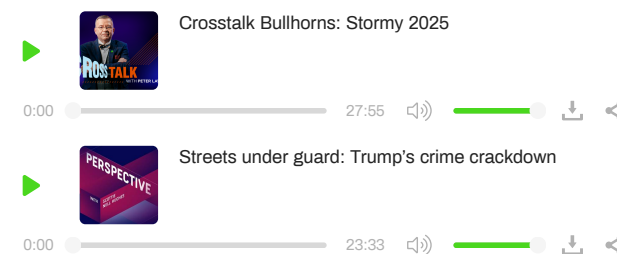


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Britain's regime is abject. There is no hope for leaders who have lost their way so badly. It is also by no means alone in NATO-EU Europe. The trend toward authoritarian information control and suppression of dissent is everywhere, from Berlin to Brussels to London. If there is hope, it lies in the protesters.

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# OPINION

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