

## **Crime and Policing Bill: why Lords Amendment 312 on ‘cumulative disruption’ should be opposed to protect the right to protest**

The government’s Lords Amendment 312 to the Crime and Policing Bill seeks to give the police new and far-reaching powers to restrict or effectively ban recurring protests based on their supposed ‘cumulative disruption’ by amending sections 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986. Following a succession of illiberal anti-protest laws, this is a major assault on the freedoms of expression, association, and assembly that underpin protest rights.<sup>1</sup> It could be used by this, and any future government, to effectively stamp out political demonstrations, actions linked to industrial disputes and protests altogether. **Lords Amendment 312 should profoundly concern everyone who believes that democratic freedoms must be defended.**

If it becomes law, the police will be required to consider any ‘cumulative disruption’ caused by past or future planned protests in the same ‘area’ when deciding whether to impose restrictions. This ‘area’ is undefined and could include an entire town or the whole of central London, and it will not matter whether the protests involve the same cause or people. For example, an anti-racist march could be blocked from Whitehall because a farmers’ protest happened there six months earlier, or a LGBTQ+ Pride march restricted because a far-right demonstration was recently held in the same town.

Whilst the government has made clear that its principal target is the mass national marches for Palestinian rights, the effect would be wide-ranging. Over 45 civil society organisations including the Trades Union Congress, Liberty and Greenpeace have joined forces to demand the government withdraws this proposal,<sup>2</sup> joining more than 100 leading legal scholars and lawyers,<sup>3</sup> and over 100 Members of Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the on freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Gina Romero, has also warned MPs that nowhere in her review of global legislation has she seen anything resembling this extreme proposal. Her briefing to MPs followed a mass public lobby of Parliament in March, organised by civil society organisations and trade unions, attended by hundreds of constituents who urged their MPs to uphold their fundamental democratic rights and oppose the proposal.

### **Why there must be a Commons vote**

The government tabled this proposal in the Lords, without any debate or scrutiny in the Commons. More than 50 cross-party MPs have written to the Speaker to ask that proper time is allocated and that there be a dedicated vote on the amendment. One day has been timetabled on 14 April, with a possible further day the following week. Given that the Bill is vast there is no guarantee that MPs will get the time needed to consider such a fundamental change to the law, or that it will be voted on. We urge MPs to push for a debate and a vote, not least so they can be accountable to their constituents on this issue, that affects their democratic rights so fundamentally.

**We urge MPs to support Andy McDonald MP’s motion to disagree with Lords Amendment 312.**<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Right to Protest, Liberty, accessed 20 October 2025 (<https://www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk/right/right-to-protest/>).

<sup>2</sup> Civil society groups condemn ‘dangerous’ plans for more anti-protest powers, The Guardian, 12 January 2026 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/jan/12/civil-society-groups-condemn-dangerous-plans-police-powers-ban-protests-england-wales>).

<sup>3</sup> Open Letter to the Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood MP Opposing New Anti-Protest Laws ([https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe71hWwQXJdYvvHSz1vCmZWvHuoKk47bEq7t\\_kxzL\\_BiXeT6g/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe71hWwQXJdYvvHSz1vCmZWvHuoKk47bEq7t_kxzL_BiXeT6g/viewform)).

<sup>4</sup> Cumulative disruption proposals and the right to protest, 12 November 2025 (<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/64698/cumulative-disruption-proposals-and-the-right-to-protest>).

<sup>5</sup> Motion on Lords Amendment 312, Crime and Policing Bill (<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3938/stages/20642/motionsandamendments/819>).

## Key concerns about Lords Amendment 312

1. **The proposed increased powers represent a major escalation of the government’s assault on the right to protest**
2. **Protest is most often effective when repeated**
3. **The proposal builds on a succession of anti-protest laws**
4. **Eroding our civil liberties will not make anyone safer - the proposal relies on a false characterisation of the movement for Palestinian rights**
5. **It could be used by this, or a future government, to effectively stamp out political demonstrations, actions linked to industrial disputes and protests altogether**

1. **The proposed increased powers represent a major escalation of the government’s assault on the right to protest**

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly which underpin the right to protest are protected by Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and enshrined in British law under the Human Rights Act (1998). The right to protest – including in solidarity with the Palestinian people – is a precious democratic principle and it must be defended.

2. **Protest is most often effective when repeated**

No protest movement ever brought change through a single demonstration. The civil rights movement, the campaign for women’s suffrage and the movement against apartheid in South Africa all relied on the ‘cumulative impact’ of repeated protests over many years. Britain’s own democratic system was born of successive waves of protest throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Had these proposed police powers existed, consecutive marches to Whitehall and Parliament demanding votes for women, or the long-running picket of the embassy of apartheid South Africa would likely have been banned.

3. **The proposal builds on a succession of anti-protest laws**

Even before this proposal was put forward, Britain’s protest laws had attracted widespread criticism. Extensive police powers already exist to severely limit the right to protest, including the previous government’s Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023 which Parliament’s Joint Committee on Human Rights warned would likely have a chilling effect on the right to protest.<sup>6</sup> In 2025, in relation to the anti-protest measures proposed in the Crime and Policing Bill, the Committee reaffirmed their concerns regarding the steady expansion of anti-protest powers, and the risk of unjustified criminalisation without sufficiently tight legal tests and safeguards.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Joint Committee on Human Rights Legislative Scrutiny: Public Order Bill: Government Response to the Committee’s First Report, 7 September 2022 (<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/28674/documents/172664/default/>).

<sup>7</sup> Joint Committee on Human Rights Legislative Scrutiny: Crime and Policing Bill, 14 July 2025 (<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/48758/documents/255740/default/>).

In 2023, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights described these earlier measures as “deeply troubling” and urged their repeal.<sup>8</sup> In 2025, over 40 legal experts wrote to the Home Secretary to raise concerns over the “disproportionate, unwarranted and dangerous assault on the right to assembly and protest in Britain”, calling for their repeal.<sup>9</sup> In September that year, the Trades Union Congress recognised a “serious escalation in this authoritarianism” and that “these attacks on the right to protest seriously endanger democracy”.<sup>10</sup>

Later that month – partly in response to the measures in the Crime and Policing Bill – the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights wrote to Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood, calling for a review of anti-protest law and warning that the current legal framework allows the authorities to “impose excessive limits on freedom of assembly and expression, and risks overpolicing”.<sup>11</sup> Two new major reports published in January 2026 have also highlighted that recent legislative changes have created a chilling effect on lawful protest and should be repealed, calling for proposals for more curbs to be halted.<sup>12</sup>

Since October 2023, the police have routinely employed sections 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act (1986) to restrict the duration, routes and location of marches for Palestine. Every single national march in London has seen conditions of this type imposed and for nearly a year the police have only allowed the national Palestine marches on two routes through central London. The police even imposed conditions to criminalise banging of pots and pans and the use of drums and megaphones. Alongside this the government has misappropriated counter-terror legislation to unlawfully ban a direct action protest group, Palestine Action,<sup>13</sup> to unsuccessfully prosecute performance artists,<sup>14</sup> and to criminalise entirely peaceful protesters.

#### **4. Eroding our civil liberties will not make anyone safer - the proposal relies on a false characterisation of the movement for Palestinian rights**

The proposal was made in the aftermath of the deadly attack on Manchester synagogue worshippers on 2 October 2025. However, there is no evidence linking this horrific attack to any form of protest and there is no evidence of any threat to Jewish people linked to the national demonstrations for Palestine. As acknowledged publicly by the police, the overwhelming character of these marches has been peaceful and well-disciplined<sup>15</sup> – reflecting a broad cross-section of society and with lower arrest rates than is typical at other large events such as football games and music festivals.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> UN Human Rights Chief urges UK to reverse ‘deeply troubling’ Public Order Bill, United Nations Human Rights, 27 April 2023 (<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/04/un-human-rights-chief-urges-uk-reverse-deeply-troubling-public-order-bill>).

<sup>9</sup> Law experts demand inquiry into Met policing of pro-Palestine protest, The Guardian, 21 January 2025 (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/jan/21/law-experts-demand-inquiry-into-met-policing-of-pro-palestine-protest>).

<sup>10</sup> EM1 Defend the right to protest, defend democracy, TUC Congress Motions, 8 October 2025 (<https://congress.tuc.org.uk/em1-defend-the-right-to-protest-defend-democracy/#sthash.MYsKeKi.dpbs>).

<sup>11</sup> Human rights official urges UK to review laws after Palestine Action placard arrests, The Guardian, 14 October 2025 (<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2025/oct/14/human-rights-official-urges-uk-to-review-laws-after-palestine-action-placard-arrests>).

<sup>12</sup> Right to protest is under attack in England and Wales, reports warn, The Guardian, 8 January 2026 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/jan/08/right-to-protest-is-under-attack-in-england-and-wales-reports-warn>).

<sup>13</sup> UK Palestine Action ban ruled unlawful, in humiliating blow for ministers, The Guardian, 13 February 2026 (<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2026/feb/13/uk-ban-palestine-action-unlawful-high-court-judges-rule>).

<sup>14</sup> UK government loses appeal over quashed Kneecap terror charge, BBC News, 11 March 2026 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c5yjdpy7vvro>).

<sup>15</sup> Policing of protests, Home Affairs Committee report, 27 February 2024 (<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5804/cmselect/cmhaff/369/report.html>).

<sup>16</sup> Pro-Palestine protests have arrest rate lower than Glastonbury despite calls for ban, 7 February 2024 ([www.opendemocracy.net/en/palestine-gaza-protests-arrests-metropolitan-police-suella-braverman-glastonbury/](http://www.opendemocracy.net/en/palestine-gaza-protests-arrests-metropolitan-police-suella-braverman-glastonbury/)). Football-related arrests

Contrary to the grotesque and false accusation that those taking part are motivated by antisemitism, Jewish people remain integral to the national marches for Palestine – every single march is attended by thousands of Jewish people, many in an organised Jewish Bloc, with Jewish speakers on the platforms. Unlike those irresponsibly conflating Jewish people with Israel to falsely justify these proposed restrictions, the national marches have made clear that Jewish people are not to blame for Israel’s genocidal actions.

As Amnesty International UK has already pointed out, legal provisions rightly already exist to protect religious sites from violence and actions where the purpose is to intimidate.<sup>17</sup> Yet far-right protests directly outside asylum hotels which threaten and harass those inside have been consistently permitted by police. Far-right mobilisations such as the ‘Unite the Kingdom’ demonstration, at which violence against the public and police was widespread and openly advocated from the demonstration platform, have also been facilitated.

##### **5. It could be used by this, or a future government, to effectively stamp out political demonstrations, actions linked to industrial disputes and protests altogether**

Enhanced police powers are an undemocratic response to protests and political disagreement. That is one of the reasons that over 45 civil society organisations including the Trades Union Congress, Liberty and Greenpeace have come together to demand the government withdraws this proposal,<sup>18</sup> joining more than 100 leading legal scholars and lawyers,<sup>19</sup> and over 100 Members of Parliament.<sup>20</sup>

This proposal comes in the context of Israel’s genocide against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip – over two and a half years of live-streamed atrocities. The ongoing demonstrations have been spurred by public outrage at the British government’s complicity in Israel’s continuing violations of international law including the export of weapons and military and political support for Israel. They continue to take place through the participation of hundreds of thousands of ordinary people across the country.

Opinion polls consistently show that the public supports the goals of the marches – with clear majorities favouring a full arms embargo and other sanctions against Israel. The democratic response would be for the government to listen to the public and end its complicity in Israel’s genocide, not to erode our protest rights.

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and banning orders, England and Wales: 2023 to 2024 season, 6 February 2025 ([www.gov.uk/government/statistics/football-related-arrests-and-banning-orders-2023-to-2024-season/football-related-arrests-and-banning-orders-england-and-wales-2023-to-2024-season](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/football-related-arrests-and-banning-orders-2023-to-2024-season/football-related-arrests-and-banning-orders-england-and-wales-2023-to-2024-season)).

<sup>17</sup> Further written evidence submitted by Amnesty International UK (CPB92), April 2025 (<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5901/cmpublic/CrimePolicing/memo/CPB92.htm>).

<sup>18</sup> Civil society groups condemn ‘dangerous’ plans for more anti-protest powers, The Guardian, 12 January 2026 (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/jan/12/civil-society-groups-condemn-dangerous-plans-police-powers-ban-protests-england-wales>).

<sup>19</sup> Open Letter to the Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood MP Opposing New Anti-Protest Laws ([https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe71hWwQXJdYvvHSz1vCmZWvHuoKk47bEq7t\\_kxzL\\_BiXeT6g/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe71hWwQXJdYvvHSz1vCmZWvHuoKk47bEq7t_kxzL_BiXeT6g/viewform)).

<sup>20</sup> Cumulative disruption proposals and the right to protest, 12 November 2025 (<https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/64698/cumulative-disruption-proposals-and-the-right-to-protest>).