

Letter from Zack Polanski AM to Home Secretary: Palestine Marches

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Dear Home Secretary,

I am a London Assembly member who attended and spoke at the peaceful Palestine Solidarity rally this weekend.

The police were informed of our intention to protest against the decision to ban the march to the BBC. It was announced that a small delegation would walk silently and peacefully towards the BBC and lay flowers to commemorate the deceased if and when we were stopped by the police. Among our group were parliamentarians Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell, along with many community organisations.

As shown in many videos, police had agreed through negotiation that the delegation could pass through and lay flowers. However, they subsequently allowed a much larger group into Trafalgar Square. It is concerning to see Metropolitan Police tweets falsely stating that people were “forcing through.”

Such language feeds false and often racist narratives about the Palestine Solidarity Campaign’s protests that have been peaceful.

I’m also disturbed by your own communications suggesting there was an intention to disrupt a synagogue. Many Jewish participants, including myself, find this accusation offensive. The goal was to protest the BBC's failure to report the genocide accurately, and this was planned quite some distance from the synagogue and way after services had ended.

Public trust in our institutions is already fragile. Politicising the police and smearing innocent people only worsens this. I urge you to review the evidence including footage from body worn cameras from the event, retract your comments and clarify the situation with the Metropolitan Police.

Thank you for your attention in this matter,

Zack Polanski AM

Green Party Member of the London Assembly

Response from Diana Johnson MP

13 February 2025

Dear Zack,

Thank you for your letter of 20 January to the Home Secretary regarding the march for Palestine that took place on Saturday 18 January. I am replying as the Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention.

Peaceful protest is a vital part of our democratic society. It is a long-standing tradition in this country that people are free to gather and to demonstrate their views, provided that they do so within the law. This Government is fully committed to protecting and preserving that right.

However, the right to peacefully protest must be balanced with the rights of others to go about their lives without serious disruption. Under section 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986, the police have the power to impose conditions on protests where they reasonably believe the protest may result in serious disruption, disorder, damage or the purpose of those organising the protest is to intimidate others. They can impose any condition they deem necessary to prevent these outcomes from occurring, including the location and route of the protest.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) have outlined their position with respect to the protest on Saturday 18 January on their website here: [More than 70 arrested at Palestine Solidarity Campaign protest | Metropolitan Police](#)

The use of these powers and the management of demonstrations are an operational matter for the police. I trust you can appreciate that Home Office Ministers and officials are unable to intervene in individual cases and complaints against the police. This is not through any lack of concern, but risks undermining the principle that the police are operationally independent of government.

If you wish to contact the MPS about this matter, you can do so directly at the following link: [Complaints | Metropolitan Police](#). The statutory police complaints system is available to members of the public who are dissatisfied with the police to make a complaint. When a complaint is made about the police, by law the force must be able to investigate it and have the opportunity to explain, apologise or put things right themselves. We think this is a proportionate approach and it is usual in other complaints systems that matters should be dealt with locally where possible and escalated only if the complainant remains dissatisfied. Where a complaint is serious or a sensitive matter, a complaint will be referred immediately to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) for consideration and investigation, if the IOPC deems it appropriate.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, then they are entitled to apply for a review or appeal, which would be carried out either by the local Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) or the

IOPC. Further details on this process is detailed on the IOPC's website at the link below: [Reviews and appeals | Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#)

I trust this clarifies the position for you.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP

Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention

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