

UK police detain Palestine Action activists under Terrorism Act



London, August 17 (RHC)-- Police in the UK have used powers under the Terrorism Act to detain six pro-Palestine activists involved in a direct action protest against an Israel-owned arms factory.

Last week, members of Palestine Action were arrested after crashing a modified prison van into an Elbit Systems factory in the Filton area of Bristol.

Video footage shared by the group showed activists spraying red paint and using sledgehammers to damage machinery inside the facility.

Under the Terrorism Act, police can detain individuals for up to seven days, with the possibility of extending this period by an additional 14 days without formal charges.

In response to the arrests, dozens of pro-Palestine activists staged a protest outside Hammersmith Police Station on Sunday, where some of the detainees were taken after their arrest.

A spokesperson for Palestine Action described the use of the Terrorism Act as "unprecedented" and condemned the police for attempting to discredit their activists.

"Now, more than ever, Palestine Action and the Filton Six need the support of the public to push back against these authoritarian attempts to protect Israel's weapons industry," Palestine Action said in a statement to Middle East Eye.

Use against Palestinians

Elbit Systems opened its Filton site in Bristol in May 2021 with a £9m (\$11.5m) investment. The facility focuses on advanced manufacturing and the development of high-tech military systems, including drones and surveillance technology.

The opening event was attended by dignitaries such as Israel's ambassador to the UK, Tzipi Hotovely, and officials from the UK's Ministry of Defence.

Palestine Action has been targeting Elbit Systems sites across the UK for years due to the company's role as one of Israel's largest arms manufacturers.

Elbit's weapons have been used in conflicts with Palestinians, including in the ongoing war in Gaza, where Israel faces accusations of genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

Elbit supplies 85 percent of Israel's military drones and land-based equipment. It also exports drones, aircraft components, military electronics and other military systems to Britain.

Palestine Action has targeted various Elbit sites in the UK, including factories in Leicester, Oldham, and Shenstone, as well as the company's London headquarters.

The group uses direct action tactics to disrupt operations and draw attention to Elbit's role in supplying arms to Israel.

Typical protests include occupying factory rooftops, smashing windows, spraying red paint to symbolise bloodshed and shutting down equipment to interrupt the production of military technologies.

A spokesperson for Palestine Action said: "Despite arrests under the Terrorism Act, giving the police the ability to detain without charge for up to 14 days, none of the activists have been charged with terrorism offences. This not only vindicates the activists but proves the state was abusing their powers by holding them under draconian laws which saw them interrogated day after day – all in a bid to protect Israel's biggest weapons manufacturer."

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