

UK's arrest of founder of pro-Palestine network sparks outcry



Richard Barnard, the co-founder of Palestine Action (Photo via X)

London, September 1 (RHC)-- The UK police have arrested the co-founder of a pro-Palestine protest network, along with several other activists, in what is viewed as a heavy-handed crackdown on anti-Israel voices across the country.

Richard Barnard, the co-founder of Palestine Action, was arrested over accusations of violating Britain's Terrorism Act after a series of speeches in support of Palestinian resistance movement Hamas in the cities of Manchester and Bradford.

Barnard, who is to appear before a magistrates' court on September 18, faces purported charges including "expressing an opinion that is supportive of a proscribed organization contrary to section 12 of the Terrorism Act 2000."

The 41-year-old has also been charged with "encouraging or intending to encourage criminal damage."

The charges, as British media claimed, relate to a protest that was held on October 8 last year, one day after a surprise attack by Hamas-led resistance groups on the occupied territories in retaliation for Israel's decades-long atrocities in Gaza, and another protest in Bradford on October 11.

On the same day, UK counter-terrorism police raided the homes of other Palestine Action activists, who had previously been arrested. Six activists were also arrested on August 6th.

"The state is harassing Palestine Action, in a bid to protect Israel's weapons trade. We will not be intimidated into allowing a genocide to happen," the group said in a statement.

Police arrested another pro-Palestine campaigner, Sarah Wilkinson, at her home on Thursday, with her son saying 12 police officers raided the house in the morning and arrested Wilkinson for "content that she has posted online."

Wilkinson has been an outspoken advocate of the Palestinian cause on social media and worked for the MENA Uncensored news organization.

The police have recently taken into custody other journalists and activists across the UK for their Palestine advocacy.

Richard Medhurst, a journalist who has also adopted a pro-Palestine line, said earlier this month that he had been arrested at London's Heathrow Airport under the Terrorism Act.

The apprehension of Barnard faced widespread flak from social media activists and pro-Palestine groups.

Tim Anderson, the director of the Sydney-based Center for Counter-Hegemonic Studies, said, "Pro-genocide British regime charges a third activist with support for the Palestinian Resistance."

David Miller, a former professor at Bristol University, said, "All disgracefully targeted by Counter Terrorism police for their opposition to genocide, which as we all know, the British state materially and ideologically supports."

Israel launched the war on Gaza on October 7 after Palestinian resistance groups carried out a surprise retaliatory operation into the occupied territories.

Along with the war, the regime has been enforcing a near-total siege on the coastal territory, which has reduced the flow of foodstuffs, medicine, electricity, and water into the Palestinian territory into a trickle.

So far, the regime has killed at least 40,602 Gazans, most of them women, children, and adolescents. Another 93,855 Palestinians have sustained injuries as well.

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