

Anti-monarchy group to sue London police over coronation arrests

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London, May 13 (RHC)-- An anti-monarchy group says it plans to take legal action against the London police over their heavy-handed response to the protests during the coronation of King Charles. London's Metropolitan Police arrested 64 people around last weekend's coronation, most for allegedly planning to disrupt the coronation, which drew hundreds of thousands of people into the streets of London.

Four have been charged, most have been released on bail, and six members of the anti-monarchist group Republic have been freed and told they will not face any charges.

The chief executive of the pressure group Republic, Graham Smith, who was one of the six protesters arrested, said on Twitter that police had apologized to him in person on Monday. He, however, planned to talk to lawyers about taking legal action.

Civil liberties groups accuse the police and the British government of stifling the right to protest with new powers to clamp down on peaceful but disruptive demonstrations. The police force, however, expressed “regret” late Monday that the activists were prevented from protesting, but defended its handling of the coronation.

Republic chief executive Graham Smith said three senior police officers had come to his house and apologized in person for the arrest that saw him held in custody for 16 hours. “I said for the record I won’t accept the apology,” Smith said, adding that the group “will be taking action.”

Concerns are growing over the increase in the police’s power, following the recent introduction of a controversial public order bill, which empowers British police to take stronger action against peaceful protesters. Parts of the legislation came into force on Wednesday, days ahead of King Charles III’s coronation.

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