

## **Crime and Policing Bill 2025**

### **Background**

The Crime and Policing Bill 2025 was tabled on the 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025,<sup>1</sup> ostensibly to make provision about public order, police powers, border force powers, terrorism and national security. The wide sweeping measures will have numerous implications on human rights, eroding civil liberties and undermining the individual's right to freedom of expression and assembly, which are protected under Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights and enshrined in UK law.<sup>2</sup>

This bill can be contextualised within a wider series of recently passed bills that seek to crackdown on civil liberties like freedom of expression. These include the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, the Public Order Act 2023 and the Public Order Act 1986 (Serious Disruption to the Life of the Community) Regulations 2023. The Crime and Policing Bill 2025 shows no significant departure from this recent trend of eroding protest rights, despite the change in government that has taken place.

In principle, the right to expression and assembly are inalienable, and peaceful protest should be protected by anyone in favour of a healthy democracy, regardless. However, it is clear that recent reforms seek to particularly target pro-Palestinian protests, given their prominence since late 2023. As well as Clauses 86, 90, 95 and 101 outlined in this briefing, the introduction of Youth Diversion Orders under 'Terrorism and National Security' risks a heavily securitised framework targeting young people.

### **Committee Stage anti-Palestinian Bias and Exclusion of Palestinian voices.**

During the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the committee stage for the Crime and Policing Bill, a question was asked by Conservative MP Matt Vickers, who has accepted donations from Conservative Friends of Israel (CFI), including in 2019 and February 2025,<sup>3</sup> when he went on trips to Israel sponsored by CFI.<sup>4</sup> He asked a problematic question, in which he heavily implied that peaceful Palestinian protests were instead a threat, and that there was a need to "[protect] the public from people who would do them harm."<sup>5</sup>

The question was asked to Venita Yeung, Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Hong Kong, who admitted "I can only speak from the experience of anti-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) protests, most of which are very peaceful and do not result in any kind of arrests."<sup>6</sup>

Not only did Vickers' question highlight internal biases that smeared peaceful protest, whether inadvertently or intentionally, but the question was asked to someone with no association with Palestinian protests, which in itself shows the problematic exclusion of voices associated with the pro-Palestinian movement in the UK. It is unclear why the question was asked to someone with no campaigning experience on Palestine, nor why no groups representing Palestinian protestors were represented at Committee Stage.

### **Clause 86: Offence of concealing identity at protests**

---

<sup>1</sup> Crime and Policing Bill. (3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025) [Crime and Policing Bill. House of Commons. Session 2024-2025. Bill 187.](#)

<sup>2</sup> William Downs. (13<sup>th</sup> December 2024) [Police powers: Protests. House of Commons: Research Briefing SN05013.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Matt Vickers, Register of Members Interests.](#) Parliament.UK.

<sup>4</sup> John McEvoy. (23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024) [Israel lobby funded a third of Conservative MPs.](#) Declassified UK.

<sup>5</sup> Public Bill Committee. (27<sup>th</sup> March 2025) [Crime and Policing Bill Public Bill Committee Second Sitting, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2025 \(Afternoon Session\). PBC \(Bill 187\) 2024-2025. Q.125. P.85.](#)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

Clause 86 seeks to make it an offence to conceal their faces at protests. In the context of recent reports of a two-year 72% rise in anti-Muslim incidents of physical assault, discrimination and vandalism,<sup>7</sup> the inability to conceal one's identity may lead to a 'chilling effect', whereby protesters do not feel safe to protest. Protesters unable to conceal their identity will be at risk of 'doxing', where identifiable personal information may be spread on the internet without their consent. This introduces personal safety risks, especially for communities subject to discrimination, and it will also introduce the threat of violence, detention or harassment for individuals protesting against foreign countries.

Subclause 86(2) puts the onus on individuals to provide proof that they would otherwise wear a facial covering for religious, health or vocational reasons. Whilst it is important that individual provisions are made within this Clause to exempt individuals in these positions, it is unacceptable to require the onus of proof to come from these individuals after they are charged with offences.

### **Clause 90: War Memorials**

Section 50(1)(b) of the PSCSCA 2022 already provides that an offence is committed in the case of criminal damage of a 'memorial.' Clause 90 seeks to make it an offence for an individual to climb on a specified war memorial, irrespective of whether or not criminal damage is caused. In a policy paper published in February 2025, the Ministry of Justice and Home Office factsheet said that the Clause would "[make] it clear that such disrespectful behaviour is unacceptable."

It is a political categorisation to provide specific provisions for 'war' memorials, especially given the Government's use of moralistic language such as 'disrespectful' to describe its motivation for introducing the Clause. Monuments relate to significant historic events, and thus are often political. Specific protection of 'war' memorials introduces disproportionately targeted restrictions on pacifist and anti-war demonstrations. It is inappropriate for the Government to dictate which demonstrations are considered politically palatable, and it undermines the freedom of expression and assembly.

### **Clause 95: Access to driver licensing information**

Clause 95 allows the Home Secretary to grant police automatic access to drivers licensing information for "purposes relating to policing or law enforcement." This not only violates the right to privacy, but could also disproportionately impact pro-Palestinian protestors. These demonstrations have been overwhelmingly peaceful, yet protestors have consistently faced excessive policing and surveillance. Clause 95 could enable biometric monitoring and retrospective identification of protestors, further entrenching over-policing and deterring lawful protest. The clause must be amended to explicitly prohibit its use for facial recognition and protest surveillance.

### **Clause 101: Cautions given to persons having limited leave to enter or remain in UK**

Clause 101 would expand cautions to include those with limited leave, including international students, economic migrants without indefinite leave to remain, refugees and others with humanitarian protection. This blurs the line between criminal justice and immigration enforcement, exposing people with lawful but temporary status to removal for minor offences. International students and others with limited leave make up a significant proportion of pro-Palestinian protestors, and this Clause would mean that attending a protest could potentially lead to negative immigration consequences, discouraging participation by those with limited leave.

---

<sup>7</sup> Jessica Rawnsley. (19<sup>th</sup> February 2025) [Anti-Muslim hate at record level in UK, report says](#). BBC News.