Dear Sir or Madam,

**RE: Complaint Regarding BBC Breakfast Coverage of Lords Walney’s Comments on Palestine Action**

We are writing to you on behalf of the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians (ICJP) – an independent legal organisation of lawyers, academics and politicians that work to promote and support Palestinians rights.[[1]](#footnote-2)

The purpose of this communication is to raise a serious concern regarding the BBC Breakfast’s coverage of the Palestine Action (PA) protest arrests on Saturday 9th August. In the BBC’s reporting, you featured commentary from Lord Walney where he criticised the gathering of these individuals condemning ‘mob rule’.[[2]](#footnote-3) The BBC’s reporting also described Lord Walney as an ‘independent advisor on political violence’, which both fails to disclose his paid lobbying ties to the arms industry and implicitly encourages viewers to infer that the matter constituted ‘political violence’. In particular, Lord Walney’s ties to the arms industry calls into question his credibility and independence on this matter, given PA’s specific targeting of arms companies prior to their proscription.

Lord Walney released a report last year ‘Protecting our Democracy from Coercion’[[3]](#footnote-4) outlining that the government should be able to ban disruptive or extreme protest groups, where PA were mentioned numerous times. During this time reports also revealed Walney was paid to act as the chair of the Purpose Business Coalition, an organisation run by the public relations and lobbying firm Crowne Associates, which counts the fossil fuel company BP and the arms company Leonardo among its clients.[[4]](#footnote-5) Both have significant business interests in the Israeli military-industrial complex. BP operates the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline that supplies 28% of crude oil to Israel. Meanwhile, Leonardo has a longstanding relationship with Israel including the aerospace and military industries. His connections to BP also faced criticism following the publishing of that report due to its focus on environmental activist groups as well as Palestine Action.

Furthermore, Walney was vice chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for AUKUS – the military pact between the US, UK and Australia. The group has received £15,000 from defence contractors BAE Systems and Babcock, as well as about £1,500 worth of secretariat services from the defence industry lobby group ADS.[[5]](#footnote-6) Therefore, Lord Walney’s business interests pose a significant conflict of interest that undermines both his public comments on the right to protest and his 2024 government-commissioned report on such matters.

The BBC’s editorial principles highlight that:

“We should not automatically assume that contributors from other organisations (such as academics, journalists, researchers and representatives of charities and think-tanks) are unbiased. Appropriate information about their affiliations, funding and particular viewpoints should be made available to the audience, when relevant to the context”[[6]](#footnote-7)

“We should ensure that appropriate scrutiny is applied to those who are in government, or otherwise hold power and responsibility, but also, as appropriate, to those who oppose or seek to influence them, such as campaigners, lobbyists, opposition parties and others; this may include scrutiny of views and arguments expressed on our output by the audience.”[[7]](#footnote-8)

Considering these principles, the decision to feature Lord Walney’s commentary on this story without disclosing his paid lobbying ties to arms and fossil fuel companies stands in direct contradiction to these guidelines. His financial relationships present precisely the kind of potential bias that the BBC’s policies insist on examining and disclosing. By omitting this crucial context, the BBC has denied its audience the full information necessary to judge the credibility and independence of his views, thereby undermining the transparency and accountability that underpin responsible journalism.

We urge the team to acknowledge this lapse in adherence to its editorial principles and issue an apology accordingly. We also ask that the BBC ensures that future coverage includes appropriate context when featuring individuals with potential conflicts of interest, due to their connections with the arms and fossil fuel industries.

Yours sincerely,

***International Centre of Justice for Palestinians***

1. [ICJP](https://www.icjpalestine.com/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [BBC News](https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m002h2r6/breakfast-11082025) (11th August 2025) Time stamp 03:49. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. GOV.UK (21st May 2024) [Protecting our Democracy from Coercion](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66462426b7249a4c6e9d3687/E03131940_HC_775_Walney_Review_v02_PRINT.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. The guardian (17th May 2024) [UK government adviser on disruptive protest accused of conflict of interest](https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/17/government-adviser-on-disruptive-protest-accused-of-conflict-of-interest) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Global Law Project (10th December 2024) [Lord Walney’s fresh ties to the defence industry](https://goodlawproject.org/revealed-lord-walneys-fresh-ties-to-the-defence-industry/) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. BBC (June 2019) [The BBC's Editorial Standards](https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/pdfs/bbc-editorial-guidelines-whole-document.pdf) Page 49, Contributors’ Affiliations 4.3.12. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Ibid. Page 53, Scrutiny 4.3.20 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)