



“Grotesque and dystopian” sentencing of Palestine Action activists expected on 12 June

Description

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Huge banner shows destruction in Gaza and says: [Protesting This Isn't Terrorism](#) Palestine Action

A judge is expected to sentence four [Palestine Action activists](#) as [terrorists](#) on 12 June, despite the activists not being convicted as such.

Judge Jeremy Johnson has indicated he may add a “terrorist connection” to the charges of Charlotte Head, Samuel Corner, Leona (Ellie) Kamio and Fatema Rajwani under section 69 of the Sentencing Act 2020. This is despite the jury convicting the Palestine Action four of criminal damage in their retrial.

The conviction follows the four activists’ direct action to damage computers and drones, and spray red paint across the walls and floor of an Elbit Systems factory in Filton, near Bristol on 6 August 2024. Elbit Systems is Israel’s largest arms firm.

On 5 May, the jury convicted them without the knowledge that presiding judge Johnson could later impose a terror link during sentencing. This is due to a long list of reporting restrictions on the UK press, which the judge used to block coverage that he’d barred defendants from speaking about their motivations for joining Palestine Action.

Judge gags Palestine Action

The gagging orders that judge Johnson issued also prevented the defendants from providing information to the jury on the Israeli genocide in Gaza, and Elbit Systems’ role in it.

Johnson also banned media from reporting that the defendants could face terrorism sentences. The restrictions only lifted on 12 May, a week after the conviction.

Should the judge sentence the ‘Filton Four’, as they’re now known, as terrorists, they could serve far longer prison sentences. They could also face severe limitations on their lives upon release.

On 5 June, Defend Our Juries (DOJ) filed a complaint against Johnson with the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office. Over 3,000 people, including lawyers, law professors, retired police officers and magistrates, have signed the complaint. It alleges that decisions taken by the judge ‘amount to a pattern of exceptional, biased and discriminatory conduct’. Judge Johnson has since refused to recuse himself from the case.

The DOJ complaint also cites Johnson’s decision to treat the defendants’ desire to prevent Israel’s mass killings of Palestinian civilians as an aggravating, rather than mitigating, feature.

According to the judge, the intention to prevent the deaths of Palestinian civilians is what brings their actions within the scope of the Terrorism Act. He regards it as an attempt to ‘influence the Israeli government’.

Additionally, the DOJ complaint accuses Johnson of acting ‘vindictively’ in remanding Head, Kamio and Rajwani to custody pending their retrial. Three of the four have served eighteen months on remand, with Corner having been in custody for 4 months.

Commenting, [Campaign Against Arms Trade](#) spokesperson Peter Bayes said:

For generations, at Greenham Common, Aldermaston, Fairford and others, the peace movement has taken action against military logistics and supply chains, involving breaching security and causing damage.

Keir Starmer himself was part of the legal team defending the ‘Fairford Five’, who carried out direct action at RAF Fairford during the Iraq war.

The ‘Filton Four’ case bears close parallels to the ‘Raytheon Nine’, where the defendants were acquitted of criminal damage at the Raytheon factory in Derry in 2006. In this case, the activists attempted to stop weaponry being sold to Israel for use against Lebanon. Their motivations for allegedly damaging office equipment were treated as a mitigating rather than an aggravating factor, as they should be.

In the Filton raids, it was abundantly clear that neither the Israeli nor UK government were the target, as they were and remain far beyond reasonable influence. Instead, Palestine Action activists sought to disrupt the means of production.

Just as one would deny a carving knife to a murderer, these four activists sought to prevent their nation from supplying murder weapons to the genocidal Israeli government. In doing so, the Filton Four upheld an ethical duty to prevent harm, and only did so when it was clear that all ordinary options had been exhausted.

Sentencing the Filton Four as ‘terrorists’ when they were not convicted as such, and when the evidence that might have supported that conclusion was not even allowed to be

heard in court, would not only be unprecedented but grotesque and dystopian.

It will always be the case that those taking non-violent direct action to prevent complicity in genocide are acting in service of humanity.

It must be said that it is a dire reflection of the UK's police and judiciary that the Filton Four will likely be sentenced as "terrorists", weeks after the Met police refused to even investigate a single one of the 2,000+ UK nationals now known to have served in Israel's genocidal army.

Featured image via Leon Neal / Getty Images

By [The Canary](#)

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