



## Jury refuses to convict Palestine activists over arms firm raid

### Description

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Hung jury in case of four protesters who raided Wolverhampton factory said to produce military aircraft parts for Israel

After more than 17 hours of deliberation, a jury at Birmingham crown court has failed to reach a verdict over whether four pro-Palestine activists committed criminal damage at an arms factory.

Iain Evans, Hana-Yun Stevens, Frank Sherman, and Hisham Alkhomezi were each accused of criminal damage at a factory owned by Moog, a US aerospace firm, in Wolverhampton.

During the trial, the jury saw footage from helicopters and CCTV cameras which showed the defendants crashing through the site's front gate and damaging solar panels on its roof.

Prosecution lawyers presented this as an open and shut case given the defendants admitted in court to occupying the roof in order to shut down the factory's production line.

They said the trial is not about Israel, it's not about Palestine! It's simply about whether they unlawfully damaged property.

But the jury was also shown a social media post demonstrating that the activists' goal was to disrupt the supply of UK-made fighter jet components to Israel.

In that social media post, the four defendants were wearing T-Shirts bearing the names of Palestinians who had been killed by Israeli airstrikes, including the author Refaat Alareer.

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Defence counsel Mira Hammad told the court last week that there was “no mystery about why the [four defendants] were there”.

It was “on their T-shirts. It’s right there in” the tweet [discussing] military aircraft parts to Israel”.

Shortly after the verdict was delivered, Yun-Stevens and Sherman addressed some 20 supporters who had gathered outside the courthouse.

Yun-Stevens led chants of “Free Palestine” while Sherman thanked those who had offered encouragement throughout the trial.

Evans, wearing a keffiyeh, told *Declassified* he felt “relieved” by the verdict.

A one-minute silence was held outside the courthouse for Palestinians who have been killed in Gaza.

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Police detain three of the group on the roof of Moog's factory in Wolverhampton. (Image: Staffordshire police handout)

## â??The more lives we would saveâ??

During the trial, the jury also heard from the defendants directly.

Alkhamesi, 23, told the court last Tuesday that the â??main intentionâ?• of the action was â??to occupy the roofâ?• because the â??factory canâ??t operate while weâ??re on the roofâ?•.

Evans, who previously worked in the aerospace sector, told the court: â??We believed the longer we stayed up there, the more lives we would save. The idea was that the longer we stay on the roof, the longer the factory would be shut downâ?•.



â??Free Palestineâ?? banner hung from Moog factory in Wolverhampton. (Image: Staffordshire police handout)

Yun-Stevens described the concept of direct action and noted in court how a full arms embargo has still not been imposed on Israel.

Sherman, who dismissed their own legal representation to offer their own closing statement, declared: "I will always in my heart know that using care and intention to disarm the factory is not criminal."

They added: "As Iain told you, the longer we stayed up there, the more lives we could save; as Hisham told you, we intended to disrupt shipments, disrupt production; and as Hana told you, we disrupted only what we deemed to be criminal."

All of the four activists have been immediately released on bail.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) is expected to decide on whether it seeks a retrial within the coming weeks.

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