



Palestine Action lawyer faces renewed contempt proceedings

Description

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Judge rules to refer Rajiv Menon KC once again over his conduct in trial of pro-Palestine activists

A leading British civil rights barrister faces contempt proceedings once again after a judge decided to refer allegations against him for a second time.

The original proceedings brought against Rajiv Menon KC were thrown out last month for procedural reasons.

But on 22 June, Mr Justice Johnson ruled that Menon's case met the necessary "threshold conditions" to proceed and that it was in the public interest to do so.

He said the case should be referred to a judge who can "deal with the matter expeditiously".

"I stress that nothing in this judgement decides that Mr Menon has acted in contempt of court," Johnson wrote.

"My findings do not bind the presiding judge. The presiding judge will only institute contempt proceedings if they consider that it is the appropriate and justified step."

Garden Court Chambers, where Menon has practised for three decades, said on Monday that the proceedings brought against Rajiv were unprecedented and have "sent shock waves through the legal profession."

"The impact of these proceedings is already being felt by the criminal defence community, especially juniors, with concerns that public confidence in the independence of the Bar and the integrity of our

system of justice will be damaged.â?•

Menon has more than 30 years experience spanning high-profile cases such as Stephen Lawrence, Hillsborough and Grenfell.

Prior to becoming a judge, Johnson represented a range of clients including [MI6 and the Ministry of Defence](#)

How we got here

Menon is accused of violating Johnsonâ??s orders in his closing statement in the trial of six Palestinian Action activists who broke into an Israeli-owned arms factory near Bristol in 2024.

The judge had warned defence barristers not to tell the jury that they could reach a verdict according to their conscience, a principle known as jury equity.

In his closing speech, Menon represented one of the activists, told the jury about the Bushell case, a landmark ruling from 1829 which established the independence of juries.

He read from a plaque at the Old Bailey commemorating the jury in that case, saying â??it established the right of juries to give their verdict according to their conviction.

In February, the jury [acquitted](#) all of the activists of aggravated burglary, but failed to reach a verdict on several other charges.

The Crown Prosecution Service sought a retrial while Johnson filed the original contempt of court complaint against Menon.

In May, four of the defendants â?? Charlotte Head, Samuel Corner, Leona Kamio and Fatema Rajwani â?? were found guilty of criminal damage. Corner was also convicted of grievous bodily harm without intent.

Two others, Zoe Rogers and Jordan Devlin, were found not guilty of criminal damage.

It then emerged, as reporting restrictions were lifted, that the four activists faced being sentenced as terrorists even though the jury had not been informed of that possibility.

In a marathon court hearing on 12 June, Johnson [ruled](#) first that the four would indeed be sentenced as terrorists and then handed down a combined total of more than 25 years in prison.

Meanwhile, three court of appeal judges [had ruled](#) that the contempt proceedings levelled against Menon were unlawful.

They said that Johnson could decide whether to refer the complaint to another High Court judge, the Attorney General, to the Bar Standards Board or take no further step.

Now Johnson has made his ruling, it will be up to the new judge to decide whether contempt proceedings continue.

Garden Chambers said it was awaiting the outcome of "this already protracted process" and would continue to support Menon "through this difficult time".

Kirsty Brimelow KC, Chair of the Bar Council which represents barristers in England and Wales, has previously said the contempt proceedings against Menon "risk a chilling effect on the profession" and called it a "[troubling episode](#)".

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1. News

POST TAG

1. action
2. contempt
3. faces
4. Filton Trial
5. israel
6. Justice Johnson
7. lawyer
8. news
9. palestine
10. Palestine Action
11. proceedings
12. Rajiv Menon
13. renewed

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1. News