

Proliferation of Terror-Associated Symbols in the UK Pro-Palestinian Movement

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Foreword

It is a curious feature of our age that societies which pride themselves on openness and liberalism are often the last to realise when those very values are being weaponised against them. Nowhere is this paradox more vividly on display than on the streets of Britain, where marches ostensibly organised in the name of justice and freedom have become fertile ground for the open propagation of symbols and slogans rooted in hatred, violence, and totalitarianism.

There was a time—not so long ago—when the appearance of the flag of a proscribed terrorist organisation on British soil would have been considered a matter of national scandal. When calls for “Jihad” or the glorification of mass murderers would have triggered unanimous political condemnation and swift legal redress. But we are no longer in such a time. Today, the emblems of Hamas and Hezbollah, paragliders used by jihadists to slaughter civilians, and chants that call for the eradication of a sovereign Jewish state echo through the streets of our capital and beyond with unnerving regularity. They are met, not with national outrage, but with institutional equivocation and media misdirection.

This report lays out, with forensic clarity and legal precision, what too many are still unwilling to confront: that a number of prominent pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the UK have been infiltrated—indeed in some cases overtaken—by those who do not seek peace, but war; who do not seek coexistence, but the erasure of Israel and the vilification of Jews. The fact that these symbols are now familiar is not evidence of their legitimacy, but of our inertia.

There is no moral ambiguity here. The inverted red triangle, ripped from Hamas propaganda; the chants of “From the river to the sea”, stripped of their genocidal implication only by those who choose not to hear it; the raised flags of outlawed terror groups—all of these are not exercises in free speech. They are provocations, transgressions, and in many cases, criminal acts. They are not expressions of solidarity, but of menace. And they are designed not to inform, but to intimidate.

The law, as this document makes abundantly clear, is not silent on the matter. The Terrorism Acts of 2000 and 2006, the Public Order Act, the Prevent Duty—all offer a legal arsenal capable of addressing these abuses. What is lacking is not the legislative means, but the institutional will. When police hesitate to enforce the law for fear of appearing partial, when councils and universities fail to challenge extremism in their own jurisdictions, and when government messages are delivered in whispers rather than declarations, the rule of law begins to fray.

This must not be allowed to continue. Britain cannot be a safe haven for the symbols and sympathisers of terror. Nor can it remain a place where one community lives in fear while another is permitted to march unchallenged under banners that glorify their

tormentors. To permit this double standard is to abandon the very principles of equality, security, and justice on which our democratic society rests.

This briefing is a call to restore moral seriousness to public discourse, and legal clarity to public space. It does not call for the silencing of dissent, but for the defence of decency. It asks only that we remember what we used to know instinctively—that liberty is not the freedom to incite violence, and that tolerance must never be extended to those who preach hate.

The time for equivocation is over. It is time to draw the line—and to draw it where the law already says it must be.

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Introduction

In the wake of the escalating conflict in the Middle East, the United Kingdom has witnessed a surge in pro-Palestinian demonstrations of unprecedented scale. From London to Manchester, Birmingham to Glasgow, tens of thousands have taken to the streets under banners of solidarity with the people of Gaza. In a liberal democracy such as ours, the right to protest remains a sacrosanct expression of civic life—one that should be protected, even amid passionate disagreement. Indeed, it must be acknowledged that the overwhelming majority of participants have acted lawfully, exercising their freedoms of speech and assembly without descending into violence or illegality.¹

However, beneath the surface of these mass mobilisations, a disturbing trend has begun to take root—a fringe yet potent strain of radical symbolism and rhetoric, increasingly visible in the placards, flags, chants, and gestures of demonstrators. These are not abstract messages of resistance or calls for peace. They are the identifiable emblems of proscribed terrorist organisations, or slogans that have been repeatedly linked to incitement, glorification of violence, and genocidal ideology. They include, but are not limited to: the green banners of Hamas, the yellow insignia of Hezbollah, the now-ubiquitous inverted red triangle² (used by Hamas to mark targets in October 7th propaganda videos), and chants such as *“From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free”*—a phrase which, in context, has been widely interpreted as a call for the erasure of the State of Israel.³

The increasing visibility of these symbols is not merely provocative. It is unlawful. The display of emblems associated with proscribed terrorist organisations constitutes an offence under UK counter-terrorism legislation. Moreover, the open celebration of terrorist atrocities—whether through imagery, slogans, or coordinated social media campaigns—undermines social cohesion, emboldens violent extremism, and directly threatens the safety and dignity of Jewish communities across the UK, many of whom already live under heightened security measures and rising levels of antisemitic hate crime.

This briefing sets out to examine, with precision and moral clarity, the legal, civic, and national security implications of the proliferation of terror-linked symbols within pro-Palestinian demonstrations. Drawing on the UK’s robust legal framework—including

¹ Mark Townsend and Donna Ferguson, "Tens of Thousands of Protesters Across UK Call for a Free Palestine," *The Guardian*, October 14, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/oct/14/thousands-march-through-central-london-to-call-for-a-free-palestine>.

² James Jackson, "Berlin bans red triangle symbol used by Hamas to mark targets," *The Telegraph*, July 7, 2024, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2024/07/07/berlin-ban-red-triangle-hamas-mark-target-palestine-protest/>.

³ "From the river to the sea: where does the slogan come from and what does it mean?" *The Guardian*, October 31, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/oct/31/from-the-river-to-the-sea-where-does-the-slogan-come-from-and-what-does-it-mean-israel-palestine>.

the Terrorism Acts of 2000 and 2006, the Public Order Act 1986, and current Home Office guidance—it identifies the statutory offences associated with the display and promotion of terrorist insignia and rhetoric. It further explores the duties incumbent upon UK authorities, including law enforcement, local councils, civil service bodies, and educational institutions, to act decisively in enforcing the law.

Above all, this document seeks to restore clarity in an arena clouded by moral relativism and institutional hesitation. There is no inconsistency in defending the right to lawful protest while also demanding that the line between legitimate dissent and criminal incitement be clearly and unapologetically upheld. To do otherwise is to permit the slow erosion of democratic order under the false banner of “tolerance.”

The briefing concludes with a set of actionable, legally grounded policy recommendations, including training for frontline personnel, public education strategies, and mechanisms for consistent enforcement. These proposals are guided by a simple principle: that the rule of law must be sovereign in public life, and that symbols of terror must not be permitted to flourish unchallenged on British soil.

Terror-Associated Symbols and Slogans of Concern

A number of flags, emblems, and slogans appearing in some pro-Palestinian circles have been directly linked to proscribed terrorist groups or extremist incitement. It is crucial to identify and understand these symbols in order to enforce the law effectively:

Inverted Red Triangle

A relatively new symbol on the scene, the *inverted red triangle* has been adopted by some activists as an anti-Israel emblem. In late 2023, Hamas’s military wing (the Al-Qassam Brigades) began using an inverted red triangle in propaganda videos to mark Israeli targets for attack.⁴ This emblem – sometimes displayed as a red triangle emoji or via a hand gesture forming a triangle – has since been spotted both online and at UK rallies. While some users claim it innocuously signifies solidarity with Gaza, extremist propagandists have co-opted the symbol to represent Hamas itself and glorify “violent resistance” against Israel. For example, online memes show the red triangle over images of Israeli soldiers or the Star of David as a call for further violence. Given its origin in Hamas propaganda, the inverted red triangle has become a marker of support for a proscribed terrorist organisation and a *symbol of hate* causing distress to Jewish observers.⁵

⁴ “What Does the Inverted Red Triangle Mean?” *American Jewish Committee*, accessed May 18, 2025, <https://www.ajc.org/news/what-does-the-inverted-red-triangle-mean>.

⁵ “The Inverted Red Triangle: A Symbol of Hate,” *Jewish Virtual Library*, accessed May 18, 2025, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-inverted-red-triangle-a-symbol-of-hate>.

Hamas and Hezbollah Flags and Insignia

Perhaps the most overt terror-linked symbols seen at some rallies are the flags and logos of Hamas and Hezbollah. Hamas's green flag bearing the Shahada and crossed swords, and Hezbollah's yellow banner emblazoned with an upraised rifle, are the official emblems of terrorist organisations outlawed in the UK.⁶ The UK government has proscribed Hamas (in its entirety) and Hezbollah under the Terrorism Act 2000, making it *unlawful to display* any article that could raise reasonable suspicion of support for these groups. Indeed, British authorities have made arrests when such flags appear: for example, in London a few years ago, protesters waving a Hezbollah flag were arrested under Section 13 of the Terrorism Act for displaying an article indicating support for a proscribed group. (Initially, police had been confused due to Hezbollah's former political wing, but the full ban imposed in 2019 eliminated any ambiguity, confirming that *any* Hezbollah insignia is illegal to show.)⁷ Likewise, Hamas's flag or logo is unequivocally forbidden – Home Office guidance stresses that *no reference to a proscribed organisation's insignia can be displayed legally*. The sight of Hamas or Hezbollah emblems in a British street is not only deeply offensive to victims of terrorism; it is a criminal offense that police are duty-bound to stop.

Extremist Chants and Slogans

Certain chants popular at some demonstrations have drawn legal scrutiny for their extremist implications. Foremost among these is *"From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free."* To many, this slogan might sound like a call for Palestinian freedom, but UK authorities have warned that in context it can be understood as a call for the destruction of Israel – the land *"from the [Jordan] river to the [Mediterranean] sea"* encompasses the entire State of Israel. The Home Secretary has urged police to consider this chant *"an expression of a violent desire to see Israel erased from the world"*, which in certain contexts may amount to an unlawful, racially aggravated incitement. In practical terms, shouting this slogan at a volatile rally or near Jewish community areas could be prosecuted as a public order offense aggravated by racial hatred, since it targets the nation-state of the Jews. (The Community Security Trust and other Jewish groups have indeed described *"river to the sea"* as a genocidal slogan aimed at Jews.) While pro-Palestinian organisers assert the phrase is about securing rights for Palestinians rather than violence, context is crucial. At minimum, the chant is highly inflammatory, and when voiced alongside praise of terror groups it *edges into illegal hate speech or terrorist glorification*. Other problematic chants include calls of "Jihad, Jihad" (holy war) directed at Israel, or slogans explicitly celebrating attacks on Israelis – all of which police have been instructed to treat as potential offenses if they cross the line into incitement.

⁶ UK Home Office, *Proscribed Terrorist Groups or Organisations*, updated March 2024, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations-->

⁷ *Proscribed Terrorist Groups or Organisations*, GOV.UK, updated February 27, 2025, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations->

Imagery Glorifying Terrorist Acts

Visual references to terrorist violence have also appeared, effectively *celebrating atrocities*. A chilling example was the use of paraglider images by a few protesters in London after Hamas's October 7, 2023 massacre. (Hamas terrorists had used motorized paragliders to infiltrate an Israeli music festival, a fact widely recognized from news footage.) Just one week after that attack, three women joined a London rally with images of Hamas paragliders taped to their clothing and signs – a gesture understood as celebrating the Hamas attack and inciting support for the group.⁸ Police identified the women from footage and arrested them; all three were convicted under terrorism laws for displaying an article in public in a way that aroused reasonable suspicion of support for Hamas. The Crown Prosecution Service emphasised that, in context, *“displaying these images [so soon after the massacre] demonstrated a glorification of the actions taken by [Hamas] and created a risk of encouraging others to support [this proscribed organisation]”*. This prosecution – resulting in guilty verdicts – sends a clear message: visual glorification of terrorist exploits (be it via symbols like paragliders, militant salutes, or even swastikas drawn to equate Israel with Nazis) will not be tolerated under UK law. Such imagery goes beyond political speech into the realm of incitement and terror propaganda, which endangers public safety and social harmony.

UK Legal Framework: Banning Extremist Symbols and Incitement

The United Kingdom has a robust legal framework to deal with the display of terrorist symbols and the incitement of hatred or violence. Key statutes include the Terrorism Act 2000, the Terrorism Act 2006, and the Public Order Act 1986, among others. These laws provide clear grounds to prosecute individuals who promote or glorify terrorist organisations under the guise of political protest:

Terrorism Act 2000 (Proscription of Groups)

Under the Terrorism Act 2000,⁹ the Home Secretary may *proscribe* (ban) an organisation if it is concerned in terrorism. Hamas and Hezbollah are both proscribed terrorist organisations in the UK, alongside dozens of others. Once a group is proscribed, it is a criminal offence to be a member, or to support the group in any way. Section 11 of the Act forbids membership; Section 12 makes it illegal to invite support for or arrange meetings in support of a proscribed group. Crucially for symbols, Section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000 prohibits the display of articles (flags, logos, clothing, emblems) *“in such a way or in such circumstances as to arouse reasonable suspicion”* that the person is a member or supporter of a proscribed organisation. In other words,

⁸ Three women convicted of displaying paraglider stickers at London protest." February 13, 2024. <https://www.cps.gov.uk/cps/news/three-women-convicted-displaying-paraglider-stickers-london-protest>.

⁹ United Kingdom. *Terrorism Act 2000*, c. 11, §13(1). London: The Stationery Office, 2000. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/section/13>.

wearing a Hamas scarf or waving a Hezbollah flag in public is a criminal offense punishable by up to 6 months' imprisonment. This applies equally to publishing images of such symbols online. The law is effectively zero-tolerance on terrorist insignia: any public display that a reasonable onlooker would interpret as support for a banned extremist group can and should result in arrest. The recent paraglider case demonstrates the use of Section 13: simply displaying a picture associated with Hamas's terror tactics was enough for conviction, given the timing and context. The Terrorism Act 2000 thus provides a powerful tool to clamp down on the flags, insignia or apparel of groups like Hamas and Hezbollah on British streets.

Terrorism Act 2006 (Glorification and Encouragement of Terrorism)

In 2006, in response to the London 7/7 bombings and the increasing spread of extremist propaganda, the UK tightened the law on incitement to terrorism. Section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006¹⁰ created the offense of "*encouragement of terrorism*," which includes making statements that glorify terrorist acts with the risk that others will be inspired to emulate them. In effect, "*glorification of terrorism – praising or celebrating terrorist deeds – is outlawed*." Applying this to our context: if a protester's chant or placard is seen as praising a terrorist attack or calling others to violence, they could be prosecuted under this Act. For instance, shouting approval of Hamas's attacks or calling for a "holy war" could constitute an offense if it intentionally or recklessly encourages further terrorism. The Terrorism Act 2006 thus covers spoken or written expressions of support for terrorism (even if indirect or coded). It complements the 2000 Act by targeting the content of speech – such as chants like "From the river to the sea" if deemed to glorify the elimination of Israel through violence. Notably, the 2006 Act was crafted to respect freedom of expression but draws a firm line at incitement or encouragement of terrorist violence. There is a clear moral logic to this: democratic societies can debate ideas, but we do not permit advocating murder or terror.

Public Order Act 1986 (Incitement to Hatred and Harassment)

In addition to terror-specific legislation, general public order laws are highly relevant. The Public Order Act 1986¹¹ criminalises the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words, behavior, or written material that is intended to stir up racial or religious hatred (or is likely to do so). If a protest slogan or symbol targets people based on their race or religion – for example, a chant calling for violence against Jews – it can fall under this incitement to hatred offense (Part III of the Act). Even absent explicit racial content, using abusive words in public that cause "*harassment, alarm or distress*" to others can be an offense (Public Order Act, Section 5), and doing so with a racial or religious motive is an aggravated offense carrying higher penalties. Thus, a protester who aggressively yells anti-Jewish slurs or who directs the "river to the sea" chant

¹⁰ United Kingdom. *Terrorism Act 2006*, c. 11, §1. London: The Stationery Office, 2006. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/11/section/1>.

¹¹ United Kingdom. *Public Order Act 1986*, c. 64. London: The Stationery Office, 1986. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1986/64>.

specifically at Jewish passers-by could be committing a racially aggravated public order offense, as the Home Secretary pointed out. The threshold in these laws is that free speech is protected until it crosses into *threats, harassment, or intentional incitement of hatred/violence*. Given the UK's commitment to pluralism, the law rightfully forbids turning political protests into occasions for intimidation or hate speech. Police have indeed charged some protesters with racially aggravated public order offenses during recent demonstrations. The Public Order Act thus serves as another tool to address extremist chants or signs that are essentially hate crimes or public harassment in the guise of political expression.

Relevant Guidance and Statutory Duties

Alongside these laws, the Home Office and law enforcement bodies have issued guidance to ensure the laws are enforced consistently. The Home Office's list of proscribed groups is publicly available and regularly updated, and special police guidance exists on identifying extremist symbols and flags. For example, the Metropolitan Police's Public Order Command has specialist officers with knowledge of flags who are deployed at protests specifically to spot symbols that may contravene Section 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000.¹² These officers are trained in the nuances of extremist iconography, underscoring that law enforcement recognizes the importance of quick identification and action when illegal symbols appear. Moreover, under counter-extremism strategy, the Home Office and Crown Prosecution Service have emphasized swift prosecution of anyone who "breaks the law – whether by hateful speech, supporting proscribed organisations or threatening public order". This comprehensive legal arsenal – terrorism statutes, public order offenses, and targeted guidance – provides the necessary powers to combat the spread of terror-linked symbols. The challenge lies in making sure these powers are consistently and assertively applied.

Duty of UK Authorities to Uphold the Law

All relevant authorities in the UK have a legal and moral duty to enforce the above laws, protect public order, and prevent incitement or glorification of terrorism. This duty spans multiple levels of governance and public service:

Home Office and Central Government

The Home Office holds primary responsibility for national security policy, including the proscription of terrorist groups and the issuance of guidance on extremism. It has exercised this power by banning organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah and by clarifying the law to police and the public. For instance, the Home Secretary's recent letter to Chief Constables explicitly reminded police that Hamas is proscribed in its entirety and listed the criminal offenses associated with Hamas support (membership,

¹² United Kingdom. *Terrorism Act 2000*, c. 11, §13. London: The Stationery Office, 2000. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/section/13>.

inviting support, wearing logos, etc.). The Home Office has rightly emphasized the “*zero tolerance approach to antisemitism*” and the need for a “swift and zero-tolerance” police response to intimidation or terror glorification on our streets. There is a clear duty here: central government must set the tone and expectations, communicating that the rule of law will be upheld without fear or favor. This includes providing clear public information on what symbols or chants are illegal – so that there is no ambiguity – and ensuring that police forces have the backing and resources to intervene. The Home Office also oversees the Prevent strategy, which aims to stop radicalisation. Through Prevent, the government tasks authorities with being vigilant against the spread of extremist ideology, which implicitly includes monitoring and countering extremist symbols or narratives in public discourse. Ultimately, the Home Office must lead in ensuring a consistent, country-wide response: *no UK city should become a safe haven for terrorist propaganda under the guise of protest*, and it is the Home Office’s duty to see that this principle is communicated and enforced uniformly.

Police and Law Enforcement Agencies

The police – especially units like the Metropolitan Police in London – are on the frontline of balancing free expression with public protection. By law, police have a duty to keep the peace, to protect communities, and to prevent and detect crime. That means when faced with demonstrators displaying a Hamas flag or shouting slogans that cross into incitement, officers *must act*. The expectation (reinforced by Home Office guidance) is that “*all available powers*” be used to prevent disorder and distress in our communities. In practice, the Met and other forces have responded by increasing their presence at high-risk protests and making arrests when offenses occur. The creation of specialist “flag spotter” officers noted above is an excellent example of police fulfilling their duty. These officers draw on expertise in extremist insignia to identify on the spot if, say, a particular banner is the flag of a proscribed group – enabling immediate enforcement of Section 13 Terrorism Act 2000. The police also collaborate with community security groups (like the Community Security Trust) to anticipate and deter hate crimes following overseas incidents. It is crucial that police leadership continue to *train and support officers* in recognizing and confidently intervening against terror-associated symbols. The law is on their side: as seen, it does not require proving a person *is* a terrorist, only that they displayed something creating reasonable suspicion of support. Thus, the threshold for action is purposely set low to empower proactive policing. Failing to enforce these laws not only undermines public order but could embolden extremists. Conversely, firm and fair policing – arrests where warranted, visible prevention of intimidation – will reassure vulnerable communities (especially British Jews who feel under threat when they see mobs glorifying Hamas) that the state will protect them. In sum, the police have a solemn duty to *enforce the law impartially and robustly* in this arena, and by doing so they uphold the fundamental British values of safety, security, and the rule of law.

Local Authorities and Councils

Local councils also share responsibility in combating extremist symbolism, both through their Prevent duty and their role in maintaining public order in local communities. Under Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015,¹³ *“a specified authority must [...] have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.”*

This Prevent duty applies to local authorities (as well as schools, health bodies, police, and others). Councils therefore must be vigilant for extremist activity in their jurisdictions – which could include rallies or public displays glorifying terrorism – and work with police to address it. Practically, councils can assist by denying public space or event permissions to groups known to praise proscribed organisations, or by using bylaws to remove unauthorised flags and stickers on council property (for example, taking down illegal flags from lampposts or graffiti of extremist symbols). Some councils have coordinated with the police to remove both pro-Palestine and pro-Israel materials posted in public areas to defuse tensions. Importantly, local authorities have community outreach arms that can send clear messages at the local level: for instance, issuing statements that while solidarity with humanitarian causes is welcome, any displays of hate or terror glorification will face legal consequences. Councils also often oversee local Prevent programs, meaning they organize training sessions and awareness campaigns for local staff and community partners about spotting signs of radicalisation or extremist symbols. The duty of councils, in essence, is to ensure that *extremism cannot take root under the cover of civic activities*. This includes everything from monitoring hate preaching in local community centres to ensuring that schools (many of which are under council oversight) are not letting terror-sympathizing symbolism go unchallenged.

Educational Institutions (Schools, Colleges, Universities)

Schools and universities have a frontline role in preventing extremist influence among young people. They too are bound by the statutory Prevent duty. This obliges them to be alert to students voicing extremist views or displaying symbols linked to extremism. For example, if a pupil comes to school with a sticker of the Hamas logo on their notebook, or a university student society starts circulating red triangle imagery on social media, staff should recognise these as red flags and take appropriate action. Educational institutions must train their teachers and campus staff to know the indicators of radicalisation – including flags, badges, slogans, or chants that suggest sympathy with terrorist causes. Many schools now include basic awareness of extremist symbols as part of teacher safeguarding training. The duty to protect young minds from being drawn into terrorism means that schools should confidently challenge narratives that glorify violence. This might involve disciplining a student who is disseminating terrorist propaganda, inviting law enforcement for educational workshops, or holding open discussions that debunk extremist slogans. Universities, while protective of free debate, also have a responsibility not to allow campus events to be used to praise proscribed groups or incite hatred. University administrators should ensure that any

¹³ United Kingdom. *Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015*, c. 6, §26. London: The Stationery Office, 2015. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/section/26>.

demonstrations on campus adhere to the law – e.g. no Hamas flags at a student protest, no chants advocating violence – and they should cooperate with police if such incidents occur. In short, educators are society’s early warning system: by noticing and addressing extremist symbols or rhetoric at an early stage, they not only uphold the law but potentially *steer impressionable individuals away from a path of radicalisation*. This preventative work is as vital to national security as reactive policing.

In all of the above, a common principle emerges: the rule of law must be enforced uniformly and decisively by all public authorities. Every sector – central government, police, local councils, and educational bodies – has a part to play in denying terrorists the oxygen of publicity and iconography. When authorities shirk this duty (out of fear of controversy or accusations of political bias), they not only undermine the law but also abandon the very communities (Jewish, Muslim, and others) that the law is designed to protect from hate-fueled violence. Conversely, when authorities fulfill their duty, they affirm society’s commitment to justice, safety, and mutual respect under the law.

The Case for Training and Awareness Programs

To effectively combat the use of terror-associated symbols, knowledge and awareness are key. Many of these symbols – especially new or less obvious ones – may not be immediately recognized by frontline personnel or the general public. Proper training and education across the public sector are therefore essential to ensure that *no extremist signal goes unnoticed* and that authorities respond appropriately and lawfully. We make the case for a comprehensive training and awareness effort as follows:

Keeping Pace with Evolving Symbols

The landscape of extremist symbolism is constantly evolving. Today’s pro-Palestinian marches might feature a red triangle hand sign or a kite emoji as a subtle reference to Hamas tactics; tomorrow, extremists might adopt a new code or image. It is unrealistic to expect every police officer, teacher or civil servant to know these nuances without training. Specialist groups like the Anti-Defamation League have catalogued symbols like the inverted red triangle and explained their context – this kind of expertise must be distilled into training modules for our public servants. Already, the Metropolitan Police has demonstrated the value of expertise by deploying officers trained in flag identification at protests. We should expand on this model: all police forces should have access to up-to-date briefings on extremist symbols (including less obvious signs like certain chants, logos, or even colors associated with proscribed groups). Similarly, school safeguarding officers and university campus security should receive periodic training on how extremist groups attempt to groom support through symbols and propaganda. By institutionalizing such continuing education, we ensure that those on the ground can *swiftly spot a Hezbollah emblem in a crowd or discern when a slogan crosses from political speech into terror glorification*.

Empowering Frontline Professionals to Intervene

Training is not just about recognition, but also about confidence in enforcement. Some police officers or teachers might hesitate to act against a seemingly “political” slogan for fear of infringing free speech or being accused of bias. Clear training can empower them with knowledge of the law and guidance on handling these situations. For example, a police officer trained on Public Order Act and Terrorism Act thresholds will know that arresting someone waving a Hamas flag is fully backed by Section 13 of TA 2000 and is *not* an unlawful suppression of protest. Likewise, a teacher who has been trained under the Prevent program will understand that reporting a sixth-form student who glorifies Islamist terrorism is a safeguarding duty, not an act of prejudice. The Home Office’s Prevent training already covers some of this, and indeed the government updated its Prevent duty guidance in 2023 to better equip frontline staff to spot signs of radicalisation. These efforts must continue and expand. We recommend tailored workshops for event organisers, local council officers who oversee demonstrations, and campus event coordinators – so they know how to recognize banned symbols and whom to alert. When every steward at a protest and every police constable on the beat has been drilled in what to look for (be it a swastika on a placard or a crowd starting to chant an extremist slogan), the margin for extremist elements to operate visibly will shrink dramatically. Training should also cover *scenario-based responses*: e.g., how to safely remove a flag from a protester or how to de-escalate chants that are veering into illegal territory, all while gathering evidence for potential prosecution.

Public Awareness and Reporting

Beyond official personnel, there is value in informing the general public about these symbols and encouraging vigilance. Just as campaigns have educated citizens to report suspicious activity related to terrorism, we could extend that ethos to reporting extremist displays. If ordinary attendees of a rally understand that flying a Hezbollah flag is a crime (and not merely a political statement), they are more likely to support police action on the scene or even dissuade their peers from such displays. Community leaders, especially in British Muslim and Palestinian-supporting communities, should be engaged to help delineate the boundary between legitimate advocacy and extremist propaganda. Clear messaging – e.g., through Home Office communications or community outreach – can reinforce that *carrying the Palestinian national flag is legal and welcome, but carrying Hamas’s flag is an offense*. By raising awareness, those who genuinely wish to express solidarity can avoid accidentally breaching the law, and those with malign intent will find fewer sympathizers and more public scrutiny. This community-level awareness complements formal training: for instance, if a neighborhood sees stickers with the red triangle symbol popping up, informed citizens can tip off local authorities before it escalates. Ultimately, a well-informed public becomes an extended eye and ear for authorities, amplifying the reach of our laws.

Consistency and National Reach

Training programs should be standardized and rolled out nationally to avoid patchy enforcement. It would be counterproductive if, for example, police in one city rigorously remove Hezbollah banners while in another city officers are unsure and allow them – such inconsistency breeds confusion and allegations of unfairness. The College of Policing, working with Counter Terrorism Policing HQ, should ensure that all forces receive the same guidance on proscribed symbols and chants, including visual training aids (flashcards of flags, sample extremist slogans, etc.). Likewise, the Department for Education should integrate extremism-awareness content into teacher training and safeguarding resources across all schools, not just those in high-risk areas. Every public sector worker in relevant roles should know the basics: *which groups are banned, what their symbols look like, and what the law requires them to do* if they encounter glorification of those groups. This could take the form of short e-learning modules for civil servants, refreshers in police musters before major protests, and printed reference guides in council offices. Investment in this training and awareness infrastructure is an investment in resilience – it ensures that Britain's first responders and public-facing officials do not inadvertently allow the seeds of extremism to be planted in our open society due to ignorance or uncertainty.

In summary, robust training and awareness programs will buttress the legal framework by making sure everyone from a bobby on the beat to a headteacher to a town hall official is equipped to recognize and respond to terror-associated symbols. Just as importantly, it will send a message to those who flaunt such symbols: *your actions will be noticed and dealt with, not passed off as harmless protest*. Knowledge truly is power in this context – the power to uphold our laws and protect our communities before hatred and violence can take root.

Clear Communication, Consistent Enforcement, and Protecting Free Speech

Achieving success in curbing the spread of terrorist symbols and slogans requires more than laws and training; it demands an unwavering commitment to clear communication and consistent enforcement of the rules. At the same time, the UK must hold fast to its tradition of free speech – meaning that our actions target incitement and terror glorification, *not legitimate* political expression. Striking this balance is vital for moral and legal credibility. In the spirit of clarity and principle (echoing the lucid, morally grounded style of commentators like Douglas Murray), we outline the path forward:

Clear Government Communication

The government must leave no room for doubt about what is unacceptable. This means continuing to speak with one voice in condemning the glorification of terrorist groups. Recent interventions by the Home Office – such as publicizing the illegality of waving Hamas or Hezbollah flags and urging police to crack down on chants that incite violence

– are steps in the right direction. These messages should be amplified: through press briefings, social media, community meetings, and any other avenue, officials should reinforce the simple truth that *supporting or glorifying proscribed terrorist organisations is against the law, full stop*. Such clarity will undercut attempts by agitators to claim ignorance or martyrdom. It is also recommended that the Home Office produce guidance for protest organisers, making it clear which symbols and chants will trigger police action. For example, a publicly available briefing note could list proscribed flags (with images) and explain that any appearance of them at a demonstration will lead to arrests. This is not to stifle genuine protest – it is to delineate the bright lines that must not be crossed. Additionally, officials should emphasize that these measures *protect all communities*: British Muslims and pro-Palestinian advocates are not served by having their protests hijacked by extremists, just as British Jews must not be terrorized by threatening rhetoric on UK streets. A government that communicates firmly and factually about these issues will help foster a united understanding: we can passionately advocate for causes without descending into hate or violence.

Consistent Law Enforcement

Nothing undermines public trust or encourages extremists more than inconsistency or perceived double standards in enforcement. The law must be applied evenly across all regions and regardless of politics. If it is illegal in London, it is illegal in Manchester or Glasgow. If neo-Nazi symbols are swiftly dealt with (as they should be), then so must Hamas symbols. Recent events have shown the importance of consistency. In the past, confusion reigned – for instance, years ago some demonstrators exploited a loophole by waving Hezbollah flags and claiming to support its “political wing,” leading to police hesitation. This confusion ended with Hezbollah’s full proscription in 2019, but it taught a lesson: lack of consistency invites abuse of the law. Today, consistency means: every officer on the street should know the policy; every time a Hamas emblem appears it is handled the same way (removal and arrest of the individual, if circumstances warrant); every complaint of inciting chants is evaluated against the same legal threshold. The public and protesters alike should come to expect a predictable response. Already, the Metropolitan Police Commissioner has stated that his force is “ruthless in tackling anybody who puts their foot over the legal line”. This attitude must be mirrored nationally. It may even be worth having joint operations or task forces for large-scale protests, to ensure that multiple agencies (city police, British Transport Police, etc.) operate from one playbook. Consistent enforcement also means follow-through in the justice system: arrests should lead to charges when justified, and prosecutors should pursue these cases to send the message that there are consequences (the CPS, for example, has successfully prosecuted a “string of offences” related to the recent Middle East protests). In short, the response to terror symbolism must be as uniform and united as the response to any other threat to public safety. This consistency will deter would-be offenders – they will know that *anywhere in Britain, the law will catch up with them* if they cross the line.

Safeguarding Free Speech and Democratic Values

The United Kingdom prides itself on upholding free expression, open debate, and the right to protest. These values are not in conflict with the crackdown on terrorist symbols – they are in fact *reinforced by it*. By drawing a firm line at incitement and terror glorification, we protect the integrity of free speech from being eroded by those who would abuse it. The law, as currently formulated, already embodies this balance: it targets conduct, not viewpoints. One may criticize governments, advocate for Palestinian or Israeli interests, and hold passionate beliefs – all fully legal. What is not allowed is *harassment, threats, or cheering on terrorist violence*. As the Home Office has noted, the Prevent duty and related measures “do not place any restrictions on free speech” but form part of our broader duty to protect people from harm. Indeed, genuine free speech is chilled when violent intimidation goes unchecked – British Jews, for example, may fear to wear religious symbols in public if chants of “Jihad” are ringing out; pro-Palestinian demonstrators exercising lawful speech can have their message drowned out by the controversy caused by a few extremists in their midst. Thus, by enforcing the law against the latter, we enable the former to speak safely. It is worth communicating this clearly to the public: *our crackdown is on criminals and extremists, not on any community or on political dissent*. This principle must guide enforcement actions – they should be firm but also careful not to overreach. Context does matter, as the Home Secretary said: waving a Palestinian flag in a general show of identity is legal, but doing so while chanting support for Hamas fighters is not. Police officers are skilled at judging context, and with clarified guidance they can distinguish genuine protest from covert incitement. As we protect free speech, we should also recall that freedom comes with responsibility. Those who organize protests should proactively discourage illegal expressions; those who join should report elements that betray the cause by invoking terror. Free speech is not a license for anarchy – it flourishes best in a society where the rule of law and mutual respect are strong. By being “*unapologetically focused on the integrity of law and national security*,” we ultimately safeguard the freedoms that define our open society.

Conclusion

The presence of terror-associated symbols in the UK’s pro-Palestinian movement is a challenge that tests our nation’s resolve to uphold law, order, and democratic values. Britain must respond with moral clarity and legal precision. This means recognizing that flags of Hamas or Hezbollah, chants invoking the annihilation of a people, and images glorifying atrocities are *not* legitimate expressions of opinion – they are a menace to public safety and societal cohesion. Under existing UK law, there is no ambiguity: such conduct is unlawful and must be met with zero tolerance. The duty to act falls on all of us – from the Home Office drafting policies, to the police officer on the street, to the teacher in the classroom. By investing in training and awareness, we equip our society’s guardians to meet this menace head-on, with eyes wide open. By communicating clearly and enforcing consistently, we draw an uncompromising line that extremists cannot cross. In doing so, we reaffirm the best of Britain: an open nation that fiercely

protects the freedoms of speech and assembly, *yet will never permit those freedoms to be twisted into a tool for hatred or terror.*

In the tradition of a lucid and morally confident discourse, we state unapologetically that the integrity of the law and the security of the nation come first. Those who seek to import the symbols of terrorism into our public squares will find no refuge in legal loopholes or polite tolerance; they will instead meet the firm hand of British justice. At the same time, law-abiding citizens – including British Palestinians, Jews, Muslims, and all communities – can take comfort that *their* rights and safety are being safeguarded by this vigilance. The aim is not to silence debate or protest, but to ensure that our streets are free of intimidation, our discourse free of terror glorification, and our diverse society free to disagree in peace. The UK authorities have both the legal tools and the moral mandate to achieve this aim. Now is the time to use them decisively, sending the message that Britain will always stand against the promotion of terror – and stand up for the rule of law, democratic order, and the safety of all its people.