

Going On A Protest/Action? Know Your Rights to Stay Free!

The recent increase in street actions of various types is likely to continue as global capitalism's unravelling escalates, they expect us to pay for it (again)...and we rise up!

More Bad Laws

It's all unfolding as the Tories and British state ups the ante of repression & authoritarian new Laws, which sit alongside or on top of Laws from previous Governments. The 4 **new Laws** of greatest concern are:

- **Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Act 2022** (PCSC)
- **Public Order Act 2023** (POA)
- **National Security Act 2023** (NSA - Law in July, many Sections in force from end October)
- **Strikes (Minimum Service Level) Act 2023** (Law in July, service levels being negotiated)

The first 3 combine with other Laws such as Police and Criminal Evidence Act ("PACE") 1984; Public Order Act 1986; Criminal Justice & Public Order Act 1994; Crime and Disorder Act 1998; Terrorism Act 2000 and Terrorism Act 2006; Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014....it's impossible to know all these inside out! When it comes to the new Strikes Act, remember the police often use Public Order/Protest laws against strikes too!

Even the most hardened Legal Support activists will only know the key, or worst, Sections of these Laws – but it's worthwhile everybody getting as clued up as they can.

But first, write down a legal protest support number on your arm & leg for any protest:

London/National – Green&Black Cross (GBC) Protest Support Line: 07946 541511

Bristol – Defendant Solidarity (BDS): 07510 283424 and Copwatch: 07748 552365

Legal Guides, Info & Links

'Key Info' & messages can be found on the various attached images/bustcards below.

There's much more detailed info online provided by various Legal & Support groups.

Here's **links to key Guides** on the **key websites** you can read in preparation:

GBC: [Protest & Legal Guides](#) (all of them)

[Bustcards](#) (incl regional & languages)

[Guide to PCSC Act 2022](#) (pdf)

[Guide to POA 2023](#)

The Network for Police Monitoring (NetPol): [Know Your Rights Info](#)

[Solicitors List](#) (criminal & civil – also used by GBC)

[On POA 2023](#)

[On Section 7 of POA 2023](#) – protests in roads/at rail stations

[On key Sections 4-6 of the NSA 2023](#) – anti-war & anti-nukes protests

Black Protest Legal Support (BPLS) - [Info & Legal Guides](#)

Liberty: [Your \(Legal\) Right to Protest](#) – also covers Articles 10 & 11 of the ECHR & the UK HRA 1998

[General Legal/Protest Advice & Information](#)

[Disabled People's Rights \(To Protest\)](#) - in association with [Disability Rights UK](#)

*These 3 **Explainers** were written about the **Palestinian solidarity protests**, but include a lot of specific legal info on the new Laws affecting many protests:*

[Liberty explainer for Palestine protests](#) – first written 12.10.2023, it's been updated as events happen & the newer Laws get used; very useful info/links

[NetPol explainer](#) – looks at likely use of new Laws especially for big London protests ie in November 2023
(continues...)

[Netpol Explainer – Could I be Arrested for my Palestine placard?...it's complicated!](#)

NoMoreExclusions: [Palestine Solidarity Support Resource List For Young People](#)

TUC – [Protect The Right To Strike](#) (a more radical link welcome!)

Our Best Defence – Our Collective Power

The Govt, Law, Cops & Media want us to be scared off the streets...So don't be!
Isolated individual activists are easy pickings for the cops...So get together!
The protest you're on may be small or huge, it may seem to be entirely peaceful & fluffy, but a protest is a protest and you can never trust the cops not to get nasty. So be prepared!

On a protest/action, at the very least, meet (buddy-up) with a friend. Even better go in a group of 6-10 friends (aka an affinity group), perhaps alongside other such groups. Strength in numbers counts when it comes to self-defence & mutual aid.

Be prepared: know your limitations; eyes open; think fast before you speak/act; have a Bustcard; no ID; only secure clean mobiles (if you must); no drugs/alcohol; no fotos/stay off the socials; no knives/obvious weapons; bring snacks/water; have maps & £'s cash; think about what you're wearing, maybe carry a change; footwear & rain gear; arrange back-up meeting points; etc.

*** On Large Protests/Marches**

These can be exhilarating, but anything 'might' happen, so stick with your buddy/group.

Watch out for: police movements/tactics and possibly kettles – where's your exit?; plainclothes/undercover cops & provocateurs; Police Liaison Officers (PLO's gather info); CCTV, media & other cameras – ANPR, facial recognition etc; stewards acting as if they're cops/bosses; people behaving foolishly or pissed in the crowd; don't get carried away by the crowd (or mob) mentality – stay focused; etc.

*** On Small Group/Campaign Actions**

You should've clarified your aims, and thought it through beforehand, from start to finish, including getting the hell out of there at some point (*unless you really, really want to get arrested – **not recommended***). These Actions are usually carried out by a specific campaign or informal affinity group(s).

Planning: should have seen specific tasks allocated out to individuals, perhaps... driver / police station support (may keep away from the action); legal support; first aid; kit carrier(s); food/drink; maps/navigation; etc.

Separate external support: may be in place for media releases; more legal support; more people coming later; etc.

***Join Or Set Up A Local Legal Support Group For Your Area**

Don't wait until you really, really need one, it could be too late then. Do it now & be prepared! Check out GBC, Bristol Defendant Solidarity, and [Bristol Copwatch](#) as varied examples.

***Online Security** – are you secure online/on your mobile? Better safer than sorry! These links may help you...[Digital Security for Activists](#); [Prism-Break](#); [Statewatch](#); [Big Brother Watch](#); and [beware the new Online Safety Act 2023](#).

>This guide created November 2023 by anons, Bristol<

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BRISTOL only
Bustcard — Front

ADVICE ON ARREST

Say **"NO COMMENT"** to all police questions during casual chats, 'booking in' & interviews. At the police station you may wish to give your name, address and date of birth to speed your release. For your protection and that of other people **don't answer further questions**.

Do **not** accept a **CAUTION** without advice from a recommended solicitor. This is an admission of responsibility and goes on the police national computer.

You have the right to **FREE LEGAL ADVICE** at the police station.
Duty solicitors don't always have experience with protest law, we recommend asking the police to contact:

Kelly's: 01273 674 898 / 0800 387 463 (out of hours)
HJA (Hodge Jones & Allen): 0808 274 8226

You have the right to have someone informed of your arrest (make that **Bristol Defendant Solidarity** unless otherwise arranged: **07510 283424**).
You have the right to an interpreter if English is not your first language.
If you are or appear under 18 an appropriate adult should be called.

BRISTOL

only - Back **LEGAL QUESTIONS about PROTEST?**

STOP AND SEARCH: You're not legally required to give your name and address under any stop and search power, see below website for more details. Legally you must be told the reason and the power that you are being searched under.

If you witness an arrest, want support or have legal questions about protest:

bristoldefendantsolidarity@riseup.net
07510 283424

Legal Observers are independent volunteers who gather evidence on behalf of protesters and act to counter police intimidation and misbehaviour. Read more about your rights and protest legislation:

www.greenandblackcross.org

After arrest &/or if you have a court date & want advice email
bristoldefendantsolidarity@riseup.net

GBC London - front

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Duty solicitors don't always have experience with protest law, instead ask the police to contact one of the following:

ITN (Irvine Thanvi Natas): 020 3909 8100
HJA (Hodge Jones & Allen): 0808 274 8226
Bindmans: 0207 833 4433 / 020 7305 5638 (out of hours)

You have the right to have someone informed of your arrest (make that the **Protest Support Line** unless otherwise arranged: **07946 541 511**).
You have the right to an interpreter if English is not your first language.
If you are or appear under 18 an appropriate adult should be called.

GBC - back

LEGAL QUESTIONS about PROTEST?

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If you witness an arrest, want support or have legal questions about protest:

courtsupport@protonmail.com
07946 541 511

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After arrest &/or if you have a court date & want advice email
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WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I AM ARRESTED?

Before arresting you the police should explain that you're being arrested and why. If you're arrested, say **"NO COMMENT"** to all questions and do **NOT** accept a caution until you have legal advice. Seek advice from a solicitor with expertise in protest law (see below). You have the right to:

- tell someone about your arrest
- an interpreter if English isn't your first language
- an appropriate adult if you're under 18 or a vulnerable person

You are **NOT** legally required to share your nationality or immigration status when arrested, although police may check this if they suspect you are not a British citizen. For guidance on the implications of being arrested at a protest, see: jcw.org.uk/immigration-advice-for-protestors

SOLICITORS OFFERING FREE 24 HOUR ADVICE & LEGAL OBSERVERS:

ITN SOLICITORS 020 3909 8100
HODGE JONES & ALLEN 0844 848 0222
KELLYS 01273 674 898 / 0800 387 463
BPLS @blkprotestlegal / blackprotestlegal@protonmail.com
GBC @GBCLegal / 07946 541 511 / courtsupport@protonmail.com
BINDMANS 020 7305 5638
MTC 07956 308 127

DO I HAVE TO ANSWER POLICE QUESTIONS?

If you are stopped and questioned by the police, or they talk to you at a protest, you have the right **NOT** to respond, unless you are engaging in "anti-social" behaviour (causing, or likely to cause "harassment, alarm or distress"). You shouldn't provide false information to the police, as this is a criminal offence. You can't be searched or arrested just because you lawfully refused to answer police questions.

DO I HAVE THE RIGHT TO PROTEST?

Yes. Your right to protest is a protected by the Human Rights Act and can only be lawfully restricted by the police for certain specified purposes (such as preventing crime or disorder) and in a way that is proportionate. For more information and guidance on organising a protest, police powers to restrict or prohibit protests, and your rights if arrested, go to libertyhumanrights.org.uk/advice-and-information and select the topic of 'protest', or use the QR code.

LIBERTY



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This information was correct as of 3 March 2022.

