



Home Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Policing of Protests, HC 369

Tuesday 12 December 2023

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Watch the meeting

Members present: Dame Diana Johnson (Chair); Simon Fell; Carolyn Harris; Kim Johnson; Tim Loughton.

Questions 90 - 143

Witnesses

I: Chief Constable Chris Haward, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Lead for Race and Religion, National Gold for Op Tarlac (the national co-ordination of the policing response to Israel-Gaza) and Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police; Assistant Commissioner Matt Jukes, Specialist Operations, Metropolitan Police Service; and Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist, Met Operations, Metropolitan Police Service.

II: Dame Sara Khan DBE, Former Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism and Author of "Operating with Impunity" (2021); Lord Walney, Government's Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption; and Robin Simcox, Commissioner for Countering Extremism.

Written evidence from witnesses:



Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Chief Constable Chris Haward, Assistant Commissioner Matt Jukes and Assistant Commissioner Matt Twist.

Q90 **Chair:** Welcome to the Home Affairs Select Committee hearing this morning on the policing of protests. The aim for this session is to look at the strategic policing response to recent protests and other events in the country linked to ongoing events in Israel and Gaza, the extent and impact of hate crime, and whether new legislation is needed to assist the police in responding to certain events that have occurred during these demonstrations.

We are joined this morning by three witnesses and I will ask them to introduce themselves. Assistant Commissioner Jukes, would you like to start?

Assistant Commissioner Jukes: I am the national lead for counter-terrorism policing.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: I am the Met's lead for operations and performance.

Chief Constable Haward: I am the Gold Commander for the national response to Operation Tarlac, which is the response to the Israel-Hamas situation.

Q91 **Chair:** We are very grateful for your attendance this morning. I know, Assistant Commissioner Jukes, that you have to leave at 10.20 so I will start with you first.

I think it would be very helpful for the Committee to have an overview of what has happened since the protests started, mainly in the centre of London but also around the country, and your thoughts about how they have been policed and the particular issues that you have responsibility for. I will also ask the other witnesses if they would like to give an overview to start us off. Then we will have some specific questions.

Assistant Commissioner Jukes: The first things to acknowledge are the horrific events of 7 October and that they caused the most significant loss of British life in a terrorist act since 2017.

Since 7 October, from a counter-terrorism perspective we have been responding with support for both victims and families overseas and in the UK to an astonishing increase in online objectionable material associated with the conflict and working with and supporting public order colleagues in relation to protests.

We have also been occupied with protective security, not just of individuals in high office—although we know from the experience of Members of Parliament and local councillors that security has been a concern for them—but also, of course, the protection of communities and particularly of places of worship of Jewish and Muslim communities. The



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backdrop to that work is 852 live counter-terrorist investigations that were already casework before 7 October.

In the period since, we have seen the most visible presentation of consequence be the protests that are the principal focus of your inquiry, but it is also worth stressing that we peaked at a twelvefold increase in the number of public referrals of online material. Of over 2,500 such referrals, around 500 have required investigation as potential breaches of UK terrorism legislation. The number of calls to the anti-terrorist hotline has doubled and there has been a significant increase in the amount of useful intelligence coming from communities from that hotline. Overall, there has been an increase of about 25% in the amount of intelligence flowing through counter-terrorism policing.

At the same time as recognising the extraordinary nature of the protests, it is worth recognising that this is an exceptional period where we have a sense of CT risk that is immediate and may point to some medium-term risks, the presence, clearly, of a vast amount of hate crime—I am sure my colleagues will speak to the experience of London's communities and more widely—and the interests of state actors. We know that these are questions that are engaging those who might be hostile in various ways from the state perspective. Those features coming together make me feel that this is an extraordinary period.

Against that backdrop, we have seen a spectrum of behaviour during the course of the protests. At the extreme, we have seen behaviour that crosses into terrorism legislation and we have taken action. Compared with the last decade, the numbers of arrests during the past two months for offences that relate to supporting or glorifying terrorism are unprecedented and are part of an overall picture of a concerning environment where people are potentially energised towards extremist ideologies. That may not be the whole character of these events, of course, and many people in the protests have very different perspectives, but we have been concerned about the range.

Q92 **Chair:** You mentioned state actors. Could you say a bit more about them?

Assistant Commissioner Jukes: Since January of last year we have been involved with MI5 in the disruption of more than 15 threats to life associated with Iranian state aggression towards dissident voices in the UK. We are alive to disinformation and misinformation online, fuelling polarisation and division in our communities. Those features are relevant to the current conflict taking place in the Middle East and the appetite that some of those state actors may have for fuelling division in the UK. I suspect that as we go into next year that will become even more acute.

We have no direct evidence at the moment linking state action to, for example, the protests, but we do know that there are states and parts of states that are concerned with some of the division that is extant in the polarisation we have seen, particularly in online communities.



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That is where our concerns are. The Iranian interest in the conflict in the Middle East is well rehearsed and that is our principal concern in the case of these events.

- Q93 **Chair:** I will bring Carolyn Harris in in a moment, but could you first say something about resources? You are talking about huge increases in the work that you and your teams have to undertake. Do you have sufficient resource to deal with this?

Assistant Commissioner Jukes: There are a number of areas where we are concerned and are having to make difficult choices. That is not new in our case, terrorism work; that is the business we are engaged in every week. Of course, we are concerned more and more with what you might describe as goal-line defence. We are having to deal with more people who have accessed terrorist material online, younger people as well, which is a feature of our work, and therefore we are invested in protective security, a part of our response that is expensive but vital. We are concerned to get ahead of as much of that goal-line defence as we can with investigations.

A short answer to your question, Chair, is that I think the resources are under greater pressure at this moment than they have been for a number of years.

- Q94 **Carolyn Harris:** That situation is quite scary, Mr Jukes. You are talking about the character of terrorism in the future. How real is the threat of people who currently or up until now have not been active, have not been radicalised, becoming radicalised in the near future?

Assistant Commissioner Jukes: I think the threat will manifest in two spheres. We have the immediate threat of people being energised or galvanised by the amount of hateful online material that is being circulated. I can say a bit more about legislation at some point but I know your next witness, Dame Sara Khan, will speak about where there may be gaps in relation to hateful extremism, which promulgates principally online. I think that is important evidence and I commend the work she has done in that space.

There is a risk, as we saw in Paris most recently, of individuals being energised by these events. Some of that is in the Islamist extremist space and some of it is in the extreme right-wing space. Last week the director of the FBI talked about red lights blinking everywhere and that is part of what we are beginning to see, an increase in calls from the public and online traffic and increasingly young people being involved. I sit here today concerned that we have at least a medium-term risk of more radicalisation deriving from the current conflict. I should also say that we have a very well-practised, rehearsed and integrated system to respond to that. We have been holding the risk present in 800 investigations and disrupted nearly 40 terrorist plots since 2017. We are very active with our partners. We have a very strong relationship with MI5 and others.

However, some of the risks around radicalisation and extremism go way past policing. These are questions for the whole of society, for regulation



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of the online space and for what takes place in education and a host of other settings.

Chair: Thank you. We understand if you do have to slip out but I hope we will have some more questions for you before you do that. Assistant Commissioner Twist now.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: My view is that what we are seeing in London is the biggest convergence of threats that we have seen for a very long time, with the impact of global events being felt on the streets of London.

The scale of the policing challenge is enormous. The effects of the appalling terrorist attack by Hamas in Israel on 7 October and the subsequent military response by the Israeli Government are resonating loudly on the streets of London and in our communities. The debate and public discourse are polarised. It is amplified and intensified on social media, there are vociferously held opposing views on many of the issues, and policing is in the middle, but our mission is clear. Our mission is to uphold the law without fear or favour.

The impact on Jewish communities in London has been particularly acute, with huge rises in antisemitic crime, which is why we have taken such assertive action and made hundreds of arrests dealing with offences identified locally or during protests. There have also been significant impacts on London's Muslim communities from rises in Islamophobic offences, which have also led to decisive action and arrests. To make it clear, there is no place for hate crime on the streets of London.

We have widely and effectively used public order legislation to minimise serious disruption caused by some of the extremely large protests in London, as I know some of you will have seen when you visited our operations rooms last Saturday. Since 7 October, we have also conducted a significant number of additional patrols and reassurance visits across Jewish and Muslim communities in London. We have visited schools, synagogues and mosques.

Alongside the impact on our communities, there has been a significant impact on policing and the impact on our people in the Met has been enormous. It is fair to say that this has been the greatest period of sustained pressure on the Met since the Olympics in 2012. The pressure has been compounded by the chronic demand to respond to Just Stop Oil over the past six weeks, as well as by significant business-as-usual events, including state events, Remembrance Day, football and other protests. It is clear that this has had a significant impact on the Met and we have had to seek help from other forces to respond to some of the scale of what we have seen.

Putting it into numbers, between 7 October and 8 December we have used 28,000 officer shifts to deal with these protests and 1,600 officer shifts on mutual aid. We have cancelled 5,500 rest days. We have more than 800 open hate crimes and over 6,000 hours of officer time will be needed to investigate them all. We estimate the initial cost, so far, to be



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about £17 million.

Q95 **Chair:** That is very helpful. Could you explain how much notice you get that there is going to be a protest on the Saturday? Are you told weeks in advance? Can you plan that far ahead?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: Events started spontaneously on 9 October, when we had the initial protest. That was a Monday night. The first national callout was on Saturday, 14 October, and we saw 30,000 people turn up.

Our engagement with the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, the principal organisers of the main event, has been good in so much they are telling us when they are going to do either national callout protests or local events in London. The reality, however, is that we normally have those discussions on the Monday if there is going to be an event the following Saturday so the time to plan is very limited.

We also have had occasions where communication has not been as good as we would like; for example, when there are mid-week protests when we receive less notice and, I think it is fair to say, the organisers have less control over the numbers of people who may come. Something that is advertised as a small protest mid-week, for a couple of hundred people, can suddenly end up with 3,000 to 5,000, which is much more challenging to manage.

Since the first event on 9 October we have been in a bi-weekly rhythm. After the first few national callouts it has gone to every other week being a national versus a local callout. The biggest numbers were on 11 November when we saw about 300,000 marching in London. Subsequently, on 18 November a local protest; 25 November, 45,000 in Park Lane; 2 December, local again; 9 December, 40,000. You can see the scale of it. In addition, other events are going on, a significant number of other parallel events occurring, which also drain resources.

Q96 **Chair:** Chief Constable Haward, is there anything that you would like to add to the information we have heard?

Chief Constable Haward: Very briefly—because it will very much echo what Matt Twist has said—on a national level, the demand has gone up significantly. As Matt described, this is the largest co-ordination event we have had in policing since the Olympics and probably pre the Olympics, too.

At the moment we are seeing the pattern of national protests one week, then a local protest, and so far, including for the Met, there have been just over 900 protests to police since the beginning of October and 100 smaller events across the country, ranging from a few hundred people to several thousand, peaking at between 6,000 and 10,000 in Manchester and Glasgow and other Scottish cities.

Alongside that, we have seen a rise in hate crime, most prevalent in metropolitan areas because that is where our largest Jewish communities are, but on a national level, the figure for antisemitic crime is up by



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680% year on year and for Islamophobic crime up by 140% year on year. There does seem to be a pattern that coincides with national protests, when we see spikes on the weekends when those events are happening or when events of significance happen in Gaza.

However, as a point of assurance, we are not seeing a rise in faith-related hate crime across other faith groups, which has remained static and stable and is comparable with previous years. The only anomaly is where we have cases of unidentified faith, when it appears people are attacked or subjected to abuse because of their appearance rather than their known religion, but those are very small numbers.

My Met colleagues have already mentioned the wider context of engagement, but in total so far there have been just under 16,000 formal engagement events with our Jewish and Muslim communities, including at schools, synagogues and mosques. On top of that, there will have been thousands of hours spent on informal engagement with neighbourhood teams across the communities.

AC Twist has already mentioned the number of Met officer shifts deployed on mutual aid, 1,600. The total for mutual aid going into London over the previous weekends was just over 2,200 because support has been going into BTP as well. For November only, I can say that we have had nearly 2,000 officers deployed on protests outside of London. I cannot give you the figures from before that because the national reporting systems were not in place then, but it is a significant test for us.

Resourcing is difficult but we have tested that and at the moment, in terms of our resilience, we have been deploying about 18% of our total assets. The biggest challenge is with resilience, the same resources being used week in, week out. That is also a challenge for the Met at the moment, having the officers with those skills finding that they are working every single weekend and probably will be doing so for several weeks, maybe months to come. It is an unprecedented picture of a lot of demand.

Chair: I think we will be coming back to that with specific questions on resilience.

Q97 **Tim Loughton:** Can I come to you first, AC Jukes? The Chair and I went to the operations centre on Saturday afternoon and it was extremely useful and interesting for us. It is clear that the operation that is going on in London is massive and comprehensive, but as we have heard from the Chief Constable that is the case around the country as well. There are very big and obvious pressures on resourcing and the police are doing an extraordinary job. On Saturday, it was not just the Palestinian protest; there was a climate change protest at the same time and, to complicate matters, both were converging on Parliament Square.

Taking up specifically the stewarding and policing of the demonstrations, we heard from the chief steward, I think, of the Palestinian demonstrations last week about their co-operation with the police and



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how they police their own weeding out of people who may have antisemitic, hateful banners and so on. It was not clear, however, whether they physically ejected those people from the demonstration or what happened to them. You have been handing out leaflets. I gather some 7,000 leaflets have been handed out. We saw those leaflets with basic information about what demonstrations should be wary of in terms of transgressing the law. Do the stewards at the demonstrations help you by distributing those leaflets?

Assistant Commissioner Jukes: I will pass that question to my colleague, who is probably best placed to answer.

Tim Loughton: AC Twist?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: To date, the stewards have not physically handed out our leaflets. They are our leaflets.

It is important to note that the Met has asked organisers to communicate clearly with attendees and set out expectations. It is clear that on social media they have done so to some extent. While organisers have made some efforts, however, we would like them to do more, to clearly call out unacceptable and potentially illegal behaviours at the events. We would also like their stewards to report any concerns to officers. We have officers through the routes.

It is abundantly clear that no matter how many officers we position on the route, in a march of 300,000 people they are not going to see everything. The crowds are 30, 40, 50 deep in places as they move down Park Lane or Whitehall. What is true, though, and what we have tried to say in our communications and have encouraged the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign to encourage in their own communications, is that we need to make these marches a hostile place for extremists and those who are supporting terrorists. We want people to do more to report things they see, including hate and antisemitic crimes, or people they see stepping into supporting terrorism.

I think there is some dissonance. On the one hand, I am very clear in saying that the overwhelming majority of people on these marches are there to do so lawfully and peacefully. That has been plainly the case throughout. However, on every occasion so far we have found offences of hate crime, supporting a proscribed organisation and people looking to intimidate. They are very small numbers but they exist none the less, and our point is that even if you cannot spot them, if even officers cannot spot them because they are in the middle of a crowd, there are other people walking alongside them who might be able to report them.

Q98 **Tim Loughton:** That is my point. When you have several hundred thousand people marching and 2,000 to 2,500 police spread across the whole operation, one officer spotting an offender, even with extensive CCTV, and then being able to communicate with an officer on the ground to intercept or challenge a certain person is not that easy if you have to wade through however many other people.



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We heard, at the weekend, that the stewards, the official stewards, the organisers, were not reporting instances to the police when they do have people all along the march and it would be helpful if they could speak to the police to say, "We're not happy with somebody over there. You might like to intervene". That has not been happening, though, I gather.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: I think that is right. We have not had any direct reports from stewards to officers. However, the fact that stewards exist and are managing the crowd is helpful.

We have seen a change in our police tactics over the period to make our response more effective. Early on we did not see a lot of things because of the size of the crowds and were only picking it up on social media afterwards, which led to a reactive investigation, which is obviously much harder because we are trying to find the person. You will have seen a number of appeals to identify individuals that have gone out and they have been very successful. Our hit rate on those appeals has been very good but it takes more time.

As the operation has evolved, as the challenge has become clear and as the impact and sense of fear within communities has been made clear to us by the Jewish community, the Community Safety Trust and others, with this number of people marching and among them people who are ostensibly hateful extremists because of what they are holding, because of their placards, we have sharpened our response. You may have seen some of our Voyager tactics, looking at social media live, looking through the lens of enhanced CCTV that we have put up and have specialists watching, and then using tools like retrospective facial recognition to identify individuals and guide people in to make arrests.

Q99 **Tim Loughton:** On that point—and I think there had been complaints early on because pictures appear on social media of somebody who on the face of it is very clearly using a placard that is antisemitic or inspiring hate or is chanting something but they have not been arrested—you have changed your tactics. You have been using social media extensively to put out those images, where you can verify those images—although, of course, some images put out may not even be for that demonstration; some images that have been put out go back several years and are from a completely separate thing. I gather you have been very successful, but particularly from perpetrators handing themselves into a police station because their images are all over the place and they have been extensively named and shamed, which theoretically is probably a bigger deterrent because people may be wary that their face is going to be all over social media and it is not just a question of their being arrested and taken discreetly to a police station.

Do you think that has been successful? Is it something that you may be using more extensively for future demonstrations? You are still arresting the person but it is happening several days later rather than on the day because that is problematic.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: We are doing both and I think it is important that we do both because there needs to be a deterrent and an



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effect on the day if we can. If we see it, if it is reported to us, my expectation—and I have made it very clear to our officers and commanders—is that we intervene at the time. The longer we do not intervene, that emboldens others. It makes it seem a permissive environment for that sort of thing. We want to intervene at the time. To help us do that, we are using technology, monitoring social media, so we can try to find these people in live time. If we fail to do that, however, the widespread publicity around those images, around those witness appeals asking for identification, has proven effective.

The other point you make that is also very important is the one around false information and fake news. One of our significant challenges—and we have become more and more proactive in trying to deal with it—is from people posting things on social media that just do not relate to the incident at hand. One example would be from when I was in the ops room two weeks ago, on the last big march. Somebody had posted images of a significant number of Muslim people praying in Westminster Abbey, saying how outrageous that was. However, a very quick retrospective search showed that the image was from 2016 when people had been invited, but it was being put up there to fuel hate and polarisation. I worry about the impact of social media. A contingent of what we see very clearly is put on there to fuel division and polarisation and to make things worse, frankly.

Tim Loughton: AC Jukes, do you want to add anything to that before I have a question for Chief Constable Haward?

Assistant Commissioner Jukes: Only to say that I think the deterrent effect of enforcement action and intervention is critical in setting a tone for the future. I mentioned what you might argue are the most serious offences we have made arrests for, offences under the Terrorism Act. We have made 22 such arrests since the start of the conflict, related to the conflict—not all of them at protests; some of them online. I compare that with 12 or 13 in the peak years of the last decade. So in two months, 22 arrests compared with 12 or 13. We do need people to set the tone and we will play our part in that but we need others, leaders in communities and in the organisations of these protests, to play their parts. We, of course, rely constantly on communities to help us defeat extremism, so I think your question is a good one.

Q100 **Tim Loughton:** Chief Constable, we have just concentrated on the very large demonstrations in London. You referenced some of the other demonstrations going on around the country and not just in the bigger cities. You also said that you have had to lend quite a few officers from other constabularies to London as well as police your own demonstrations and deal with the increase in the incidence of hate crimes away from demonstrations. Would you say that some of the bigger demonstrations in other parts of the country are well stewarded and well organised? Or is it rather more erratic and is the communication with the organisers less sufficient than it is in London, where they can do some proper planning?



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Chief Constable Haward: Overall, the communication and engagement with those who organise protests has been very good, albeit, as AC Twist said, the notice tends to be given on the Monday before the protest. Where we have had larger protests with thousands of people turning up, we have had notice. The stewarding of those events has been largely well organised. I agree with AC Twist that we do not get much reporting from the stewards about hate crime and behaviour happening within the protests, but that probably tends to be because the stewards are organised by the protest organisers themselves.

Overall, we have seen very peaceful protests, given the numbers that have turned out. The stewarding has been good. The ones that have caused more difficulty are midweek ones that happen spontaneously and tend to be smaller numbers—300 to 400 people, but still enough to cause some distress and anxiety within communities—and where we have no notice of the protest. These are smaller groups taking action. We have seen some of that in Leicestershire particularly, with small groups targeting companies or individuals with no notice. Those have been the most difficult situations to respond to. Overall, I would say that the large protests have been well informed, well stewarded and largely peaceful, as AC Twist said about the metropolitan ones, given the scale of what we are facing.

Q101 **Carolyn Harris:** AC Twist, we talked about how you use social media when you have identified someone who has put something unacceptable in a post. How co-operative are the march organisers in identifying these individuals?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: I am not aware of any circumstances where the march organisers themselves have identified an individual, but to be realistic, the march organisers are a very small group of people and there are 300,000 people attending who are not directly under their direction and control. In fact, you see a number of other splinter groups, different protest groups that come and latch themselves on to the main protest, as we saw at the weekend. There was a climate protest that started from a different place but ended in the same place with about 3,000 other people. I am not sure how practical it would be to expect the march organisers to know who everybody was.

Q102 **Carolyn Harris:** Do they use their social media to promote your posts?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: Not that I am aware of.

Q103 **Carolyn Harris:** Okay, thank you. I will turn your attention to something I asked march organisers last week about protests outside the homes of politicians. I will caveat this by saying that I do not think we are so important that it is a prime subject, but I think that we should bear in mind that the people in those offices and in those homes are not us because we are in London. They are our families and our staff. I asked the march organisers if they would condemn those protests but they refused. Would you please give us some background into those protests?



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Assistant Commissioner Twist: If I may, I will start and then pass to Matt, who covers the Bridger network for all MPs and elected officials. To be clear, we wrote a letter to all Members of Parliament and councillors in the London metropolitan area. Ade, my Gold Commander for that week, wrote to them when we saw this was happening.

For me, it feels unacceptable to target people's homes. There are plenty of places where people can legitimately protest, be that at the heart of Government in Whitehall, different Government Departments or even constituency offices. Places of work seem to be a legitimate place to protest. To target an individual in their home is unacceptable, I believe. We have set out that we will respond quickly. There is specific legislation we can use under section 42 of the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001, which was set up for a different purpose in the early 2000s, linked to animal rights, but it is relevant today in dealing with protest that targets people in their homes. For me, that would include MPs.

From a public order perspective, I have given very clear direction to our commanders that we expect them to remove any protest a sensible distance away from somebody's home because we do not think that it is right to target a home address.

Q104 **Carolyn Harris:** Before AC Jukes comes in, you said that outside an office is legitimate. I accept that, but surely there has to be a level beyond which a line is crossed; for example, vandalism of the building, referring to the MP as a baby killer, or leaving effigies of what appears to be a dead baby outside somebody's office. Surely that is not acceptable.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: Vandalism is a crime. Clearly, that is unlawful and we would take action. I have sent guidance to our officers that it is important that places of work can function as places of work. That means that people should not be intimidated coming and going, and free access should be available. While it might be legitimate protest, on the other side of the road might be the best place as opposed to crowding around somebody's front door. Of course, if people commit individual offences, whether under the Public Order Act or the Criminal Damage Act, we have a clear expectation that we would deal with it and set the tone that this is not acceptable. In a democratic society, we need our elected representatives to be able to act with their conscience and to do their job. They cannot do that if they are worried about people intimidating them.

Assistant Commissioner Jukes: I would double down on that point. It is antidemocratic in principle if people cannot operate and feel safe in their elected roles. They are responsible for the arrangements that were put in place after the murder of Jo Cox and reinforced after the murder of Sir David Amess. While part of our focus is on protest, I am concerned about the intimidating effect on MPs when they are concerned for their security. By extension, I would say that also applies to councillors and faith leaders.

This has been a period where the bridge-builders have come under particular attack. People who have stepped forward to take a multi-faith



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perspective on occasions have drawn particular hostility. Sadly, as I have seen across our work in protecting Members of Parliament, online hatred directed at women and those from minority backgrounds is the most acute. We have recorded over 60 crimes since 7 October directly related to the conflict that are associated with targeting Members of Parliament. That is about double the number of offences.

The public may not be aware that week on week we record crimes committed against Members of Parliament and their constituency offices. The majority of those are online malicious communication. We have been very clear that while there is an absolutely appropriate right to protest your MP, it feels unacceptable to do that at their homes. It will have a chilling effect on democracy if people cannot live and work and their families and constituency office employees do not feel safe.

We are committed to working with the Parliamentary Security Department for your safety, but by extension I am concerned about the bigger number, in the region of 20,000 councillors and other elected leaders in devolved Administrations and mayoral administrations who also need attention in this respect. We are talking with other parts of government about that.

Q105 Simon Fell: I am keen to draw out some of the costs and impacts of policing these protests. We have already had some figures mentioned earlier in questioning. To set the scene, when a protest is announced and you are looking at roughly 100,000 people—sometimes more, sometimes less—what is the process you go through to ensure you have a sufficient number of officers policing the protest, in the control room and other support drawn from other forces? What does that look like?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: One thing to start with is that the Met police is very experienced at dealing with complex protests and major events. It is fair to say that the tempo and pressure of these events week in and week out has been extraordinary, even for a well-resourced organisation that is capable of dealing with it.

When we get told that there will be a protest, a command team is appointed who look at what the organisers want to do, what the route will be and what the organisers expect in numbers, but that is not always known. As I mentioned earlier, the organisers do not have a great deal of control over the numbers. Sometimes they think several hundred thousand will turn up and they do not, and other times they think 50,000 will turn up and more will come.

We then look at our strategic intentions. For these protests in particular, given the level of fear in communities and the crimes we have consistently seen, we need to be able to take more assertive action, which requires more resources. First, we look to prevent crime. We do that by giving out leaflets, having people at the assembly points, looking to spot people and using evidence gatherers and intelligence teams based around an assembly point. We then need a capability to intervene if crimes are seen. That requires having significant numbers of officers at



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different points along the route ready to intervene if our Voyager teams, who are monitoring the CCTV, spot people.

At the end of any march or assembly, we need the ability to ensure an effective dispersal. The overwhelming majority of those who attend these marches disperse on their own very quickly, impressively so, actually. The flip side of that is that every week we have seen smaller groups, several hundred strong, looking to hang around, to march around the west end causing antisocial behaviour, using flares, using fireworks and looking for confrontation. We need to resource this efficiently to make sure that we can deal with that.

One of the things that we focus on is our legal framework. Over the span of time of these marches, we have used more and more of our legal framework to the point where I think that we are using the maximum we can to impose preconditions under sections 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act in relation to assemblies. We use section 60AA on the wearing of face coverings and asking people to remove it. At the end of an assembly, once the stated end time of the protest has happened, we use section 35 dispersal orders to prevent the crime and disorder we have seen.

As the Chair and Mr Loughton will have seen on the weekend, all that points to an incredibly resource-intensive operation. About 2,000 to 3,000 officers are needed just for that. If you take everything into account, including road closures, identification, charge centres, investigators, as well as the public order officers deployed on the ground, it is much bigger than that.

Q106 **Simon Fell:** Thank you. We will come back to potential need for new legislation. On direct impact, that is a significant number of officers. When you are policing in London, what is the split between Metropolitan police officers and officers drawn from elsewhere in the country?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: We try in so far as we can not to pull people in from the rest of the country. Mutual aid, while a well-established protocol nationally, is something we should only use when we really need it. We have really needed it a number of times. Every other weekend since mid-November, when there has been a national callout, we have called on 20 PSUs, or groups of officers—about 450 officers—to come in and assist. On a busy day, it makes up between a fifth and a quarter of our overall resourcing for the national callouts.

The impact on the Met is also significant. All the officers we use on this are those who would otherwise be policing communities, doing proactive tasks or dealing with crime and investigations. On some weekends we have had to move our response teams, our neighbourhood teams and some of our proactive teams on to 12-hour shifts. If you move all your borough-based resources on to 12-hour shifts, it frees up a shift of people you can bring in. That is not without cost or impact on the officers who, having done this for many weeks now, are tired.



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Finally, we are looking to spread the impact across the wider organisation. Within the Met, we have about 3,500 public order trained officers—level 2 officers—and they have done the majority of this. That is a small number doing a disproportionate amount. We are looking at officers in other supporting roles spread across the whole organisation to see how others might be able to backfill those people so they can get some time off.

Q107 Simon Fell: You led me neatly to my next question, which is on the operational impact for other parts of policing within London. If they are policing protests, they are not doing something else. Do you have metrics on what that looks like? What is not being addressed? How many crimes are not going answered as a result of these protests?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: We are tracking our performance, paying keen attention to things such as neighbourhood crime. We have seen an increase in robbery recently and an increase in a number of neighbourhood crime metrics. At the moment, it is too early to say if that is because we have extracted lots of people and there are fewer officers in communities, but the analysis on that is being done. It is logical to think that if we are extracting many officers and bringing them to central London to deal with these protests, there will be an impact elsewhere.

Chair: The Chief Constable wants to come in on that point as well.

Chief Constable Haward: I have a couple of quick points in support of what AC Twist has said, particularly with resources. When mutual aid is requested, it goes through the National Police Coordination Centre. We then look at our resourcing level and the request is made of all forces across the country. We try to balance it region by region so that a single force is not adversely affected in a disproportionate way to others.

Matt has described the situation in the Met very well. The key for the Met here is not about its ability and the number of resources it has, but the wellbeing of its officers. Matt has plenty of resources he could use week in, week out, but we need to think about the wellbeing of our officers and how we do that. The ongoing effect on normal policing is seen across all our forces. If we put people into mutual aid or into policing protests, they come from our neighbourhood teams and our response teams. We are seeing a denudation of some of our day-to-day resourcing and resilience. We also take into account the investigative burden that comes with a 680% rise in antisemitic crime that is being investigated. So far, across the country, there have been about 649 arrests for this antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crime. That is a burden, as well as the burden around our custody suites, charging process, criminal justice process and into court.

The knock-on impact here is significant. Whether we can actually evidence where that impact is being felt at the moment—we are only two and a half months into this—it is difficult, but it will be a piece of analysis we work through over the coming months, particularly as we move into a return to normality and recovery phase in the operation.



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Q108 **Simon Fell:** Thank you. That is very helpful. I wonder if both of you might be able to share that analysis with us when it is complete so we can get a picture of the impact.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: Yes, in due course. Things such as the leadership capacity, the reform we are trying to do, particularly in the Met, the impact on local officers, the budget—I mentioned a figure earlier, but that will only rise and is already a very pressured budget—crime and fatigue are the key issues we will look at.

Q109 **Simon Fell:** Thank you. I have one more question on this before we go, if you do not mind. Obviously, you are cancelling a lot of leave at the moment as you move resource around. When these protests come to an end, as we hope they will, do you have an estimate of the impact as a result of trying to backfill leave and give your officers the time off that they deserve?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: That is a good question. So far, 5,500 rest days have been cancelled. That is 5,500 rest days people are owed that we need to give them an opportunity to take. It is also fair to say that, while we have had some welcome news that we do not think there will be any major protests now before the start of January, this is not over. This is continuing. There will be further protests in January, it seems. While I say it is welcome news, I caveat that with the fact that geopolitical events might well change that.

One of the things we have to do is to be able to respond at short notice. As well as the big set pieces on a weekend, we also have to respond to short notice protests, whether that is in local communities or in Whitehall. That requires us to have more officers ready than otherwise would be the case. I think that the impact is significant and it is not over yet. The 5,500 rest days will increase.

Simon Fell: Chief Constable, you have your hand up. Same question.

Chief Constable Haward: Again, it is a similar picture nationally. While not on the same scale as the Metropolitan, of the 2,200 officers deployed on mutual aid, a large proportion of those will be on cancelled rest days to maintain resilience within forces. Those will have to be honoured or paid back at some point in the future. It will also entail significant overtime because of the hours that they will have worked through those days.

To emphasise Matt's point that this is not over, we expect these protests to go on into the new year, probably for several months to come. We are also seeing the concurrency of the protests. We have the environmental protest Just Stop Oil, but we are seeing smaller protests in a number of forces around asylum centres, such as Bibby and Scampton, all of which are putting pressure on some of the smaller forces and their ability to provide mutual aid to the Metropolitan. A lot of that is covered either through overtime or additional resources that have been pulled from their normal shift. There will be a significant payback, but it will continue for



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months to come yet and the true cost of this I think is yet to be really understood.

Q110 Simon Fell: Thank you for that. This is perhaps a cheeky question to ask you. You are not the only emergency services on site during protests. Do you have any idea about the impact on other emergency services, notably the NHS and paramedics?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: We work closely with London Ambulance Service, London Fire Brigade and the whole strategic co-ordinating group across London. I am not aware of a significant uplift in demand as a result of these protests. Your colleagues may have seen the fire service and ambulance service in the special operations room on Saturday. We have to work closely with them because having 100,000 people march through London means that you cannot use the roads you would normally use. You have to take different routes, which means that the congestion is worse. We are used to doing that and dealing with large amounts of ceremonials, so it is manageable but it is not without impact. I am afraid I cannot say whether it has had an impact on their demand.

Q111 Kim Johnson: AC Twist, we heard last week from the organisers of the ceasefire marches about the politicised policing of ceasefire marches as a result of the former Home Secretary's comments about these being hate marches. Could you respond to that statement, please?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: I would say very simply that we police without fear or favour. We uphold the law as it is, not how others might wish it to be. I do not feel that the policing response has been politicised in any way.

Q112 Kim Johnson: You spoke this morning about the 7,000 leaflets issued. Again, last week we heard that leaflets were only issued to the ceasefire marches. Would you be able to confirm if that was true or not?

Assistant Commissioner Twist: I have a copy of the leaflets we are issuing here. We are responding to what we see in the crowds. These are very large protests with the overwhelming majority of people protesting peacefully and lawfully, but every week a small number of people are committing hate crime, or worse, supporting terrorists, with the placards and things that they are waving.

One of the interventions we took around crime prevention to reassure the public or communities was asking people to stay on the right side of the law and to give them an indication as to what might be illegal, in case they were wondering. It sounds basic, I know, but we have seen all this. We are asking them to avoid racist or hateful speech against any faith, to avoid supporting Hamas—it is a proscribed organisation; it is illegal—and to avoid celebrating or promoting acts of terrorism. We felt that we needed to do this because we want to set a tone.

From a policing perspective, we see the impact this level of fear is having on communities. We need to be very clear that we will not tolerate this behaviour. Only on Saturday, we made 14 arrests. Bearing in mind we



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are week 10, we made 14 arrests: a 34-year-old male for a placard talking about Nazism, a 50-year-old female for a placard with the picture of a senior Israeli politician—

Q113 Kim Johnson: AC Twist, thank you for the explanation but that was not the question. I asked whether leaflets were issued to other marches. We are aware that pro-Israel far-right protesters were joining the antisemitism march on 25 November. Were leaflets issued on that march to inform the far-right people involved of what hate crime is? We know there are far-right proscribed groups, so if any of those people were involved, what information? There has been some suggestion that it has not been a balanced approach. That is why I am asking you these questions.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: I understand. We have only given out leaflets at the main Palestinian Solidarity Campaign marches. That is because that is where we have seen the reporting. At the other marches, I have not seen reporting of either proscribed or hateful material. If we see that, we will review the position.

Q114 Kim Johnson: We heard last week that Met police has said that these marches have been wholly peaceful, yet representatives from CAA say that these marches are making London a no-go area for Jews. I ask you to comment on those statements, please.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: The impact on the Jewish community is clear. We have worked closely with the Community Safety Trust, who represent security for the Jewish population. In pure numbers, an estimate of the whole Jewish population in the United Kingdom is about 285,000 people. About half of those people live in London. We have seen marches of over 300,000 people ostensibly opposing that and putting them in fear. I think that in policing without fear or favour it is important that we uphold the law and, where we see offences, we take action. In that way, we are looking to reassure communities.

We are also doing a huge amount with both the Muslim and the Jewish communities by visiting synagogues, mosques and schools. We are trying to provide reassurance in local communities that we are there to help everybody, but we have to uphold the law. That is what we do. If people transgress, we will take action.

Q115 Kim Johnson: I think that it was you who mentioned before about the disproportionate rise in Islamophobic hate crimes. I am interested to know what the police are doing to try to build confidence in those diverse communities, where often the relationship with the police is not great.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: I agree. That is the purpose of our reassurance effort. That is the purpose of the visits, being present in synagogues and mosques, and in reaching out to communities. That is one of the areas of demand that I did not touch on when Mr Fell and I were talking about the volume coming in to London. There is also additional volume being put into local reassurance, particularly in some of our most diverse boroughs that have the largest Muslim and Jewish



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communities, so we can be more visible, more present and more responsive to their needs. As I said at the outset, this is a hugely polarising issue. As we talked about with social media, it is an issue where people are trying to whip up and put people in fear even more, sometimes through fake news or sometimes just through the repetitive narrative.

You mentioned one point on the characterisation of the marches and I did not address it, I apologise. It is fair to say that the overwhelming majority of people coming into these marches are doing so peacefully and lawfully, but it is also fair to say that on every occasion we have seen a very small minority who have committed offences, either of hate crime or of supporting terrorists.

Q116 **Kim Johnson:** Thanks, AC Twist. Chief Constable, you had your hand up, or was that a legacy hand?

Chief Constable Haward: In response to the question you raised about the fear and engagement with communities, we recognise that fear. We know that the protests have played into that as well as social media. A lot of the data also shows that the general media has a huge influence on the fear in our communities and it has actually been shown to be probably the most influential in driving that fear.

Going back to the work that AC Twist mentioned, nationally over the past eight weeks there have been nearly 16,000 formal engagement events with synagogues, mosques, schools and universities on top of what will be a huge amount of work going on in our neighbourhood policing teams and through our support networks to engage with those communities. We have also done exercises and workshops with our Jewish communities and support networks as well as with our Muslim support networks.

I must point out that trying to address fear and community adhesion is not just a police responsibility. We need communities, local authorities, DLUHC and others to work with us to make sure of the narrative and reassurance that the work we do together makes a difference to our communities. I can assure you that policing is doing everything it can on top of policing protests to make sure that engagement continues. We work with those communities to try to make sure that they feel safe, that they can report hate crime in to us and be assured that we address that and take action against that hate crime where it is appropriate to do so.

As I said, there have been 649 arrests related to antisemitic and anti-Islamic hate crime. Of those, about 60% are antisemitic and 40% are Islamophobic crimes. Putting that into the context of total reported crime over that period of 2,800 offences, it is about 23% of those that led to arrest. Please bear in mind that a significant proportion of that 2,800 will be summary only offences so will not have powers of arrest attached to them and will be dealt with through fixed penalty notices or other diversionary tactics. There is a huge amount of work across all our communities and in education establishments going on and we will continue to do that.



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Q117 **Kim Johnson:** I will ask a question about police officers undertaking the public order training. I am curious because we have heard in the media what constitutes a hate chant or antisemitism, whether that is “jihad” or “from the river to the sea”. I wonder whether there are similar that the police have been alerted to on Islamophobic hate crime.

Chief Constable Haward: We have worked with the College of Policing and with our community networks to look at that. We have engaged legal support with barristers to look at where the law is being breached. We have set up a repository of good practice and guidance for public order officers, commanders and those who are at the front end around what might or might not constitute an offence.

The key point here is, as with anything within the Public Order Act, it comes down to the context and the narrative at the time. It is very difficult. We have had this conversation in a previous House quiz. When does it constitute an offence? When would a power of arrest be apparent? It is very difficult because it is about the context and the situation at the time and the interpretation of that. Over the past few weeks, we have taken a different stance in our policing approach to one of proactive arrest and action, and await the legal advice post arrest as to whether it did or did not constitute an offence. The whole thing comes down to interpretation and the way the law is written. That really is a matter for Parliament rather than for policing to tie up.

Q118 **Kim Johnson:** I have one final question. We talked about the increase in reporting of antisemitic hate crime. Is that a result of CST being an organisation that is well funded by the Government to support that and there being no equivalent organisation for Islamophobia?

Chief Constable Haward: I do not think it has anything to do with the funding. CST is very active and supportive of the community, as you would expect. You also have Tell MAMA, which acts in a similar way, not with community support but with Islamophobic reporting. The numbers that both of those are reporting in to policing are similar to what we are picking up through our own reporting channels.

We commissioned a piece of work to look at whether there was under-reporting in either the Jewish or Muslim communities through DCC Mark Hamilton, the national police chief lead for hate crime, and Paul Giannasi, who leads on this for us on a tactical level. The summary of that shows our Muslim communities are less likely to report crime into policing because of long-standing issues of trust and confidence in policing, which we are well aware of and we continue to work on. The relationship with the CST is a bit more positive with our Jewish communities. That trust and confidence is more prevalent and more supported and they have more confidence in reporting to us. I think that there are differences in the outlook of those two communities, rather than it being a funding issue.

Q119 **Chair:** Thank you very much. We have overrun slightly. I apologise for that. I wondered if you might be able to write to the Committee about



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the budget implications, because we have not gone into the money. We have talked a lot about the resources, the police officers and so on, but I think that the issue around money and budgets will be important for the Committee to look at as well. Please write to me with that information. That will be very helpful.

Assistant Commissioner Twist: I am happy to.

Chair: Thank you both for attending this morning. It has been a useful session to hear directly from both of you. Thank you very much indeed. We will now move on to our second panel. Thank you.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Dame Sara Khan DBE, Robin Simcox and Lord Walney.

Q120 **Chair:** Thank you for your patience. We are running slightly over time. I think that Lord Walney needs to leave at 11.30 am. Is that correct?

Lord Walney: As long as I could be away by midday, that will be great.

Chair: Hopefully we will be finished before then. Thank you. Could each of you introduce yourselves to the panel? Dame Sara, would you like to start?

Dame Sara Khan: Good morning, everyone. I am the Government Independent Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience, but I am speaking today in the capacity as the former Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism.

Robin Simcox: Good morning, everyone. I am the current Commissioner for Countering Extremism.

Lord Walney: I am the Government's Independent Adviser on Political Violence and Disruption.

Chair: Thank you. I will go straight to Tim Loughton.

Q121 **Tim Loughton:** Lord Walney, I will ask you first to explain the review that you are undertaking. Obviously, a lot has happened relevant to that review with the demonstrations and the rise in hate crime we have seen across various scenarios. I think that you gave an interview in *The Telegraph* recently about making changes to the law on police powers, to ban marches and for fuelling antisemitic crime. Do you want to say where you are on the review and how practically that recommendation could become a thing?

Lord Walney: Yes. The latter point is a key question. I was literally at the point of handing in what I thought was the final draft of the review, then we had the massacres of 7 October and the immediate sweep of protests and the issues around that that have happened since. I am now rapidly reviewing that with a view to resubmitting imminently.



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The question of whether the current suite of powers is sufficient to provide the level of protection, in particular in this instance for the Jewish community in London and across the UK, is key. I am concerned that the legislation as it stands is unclear and untested on the issue of giving the police the powers that they could use to protect the Jewish community in particular in this instance from serious disruption. You have powers in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act to allow the police to use the public order legislation to impose conditions on marches and even requesting banning them if there is sufficient disruption, but the way that it is drafted it is unclear whether that will be sufficient.

Thus far I do not think that we have seen the police test those provisions, which gives a dilemma for lawmakers. If they wish to ensure that the explosion of antisemitism and the culture of fear being seen by Jewish people can be properly addressed, do they persevere with waiting to see whether the current provisions are sufficient or do they try to give an extra level of protection or steer through enhanced legislation?

Q122 Tim Loughton: What would be the grounds on banning any of the big weekend demonstrations we have seen? Would you personally advocate banning any of them so far?

Lord Walney: The cumulative level of disruption for the majority of Jewish people living in the capital—having an increased level of fear, not wishing to come into the centre because of fear of the marches, the rise in antisemitic incidents—ought to make us want to place much greater conditions on those marches or even pause them.

As it stands, the legislation says that the police need to make a judgment based on serious disruption to the life of the community. Two questions come from that. First, rather than simply the threat of serious or violent disorder on a particular incident, but a build-up of weekly or bi-weekly marches and the level of threat that that increases cumulatively, can that be captured by the current legislation? That is not clear. Secondly, the life of the community, can that practically, usefully extend to the level of protection and security needed by one part of the community or not? Again, it is relatively unclear and untested.

I would like to see that tested in a practical way. I would like to see greater conditions, which would immediately give us a better sense as to whether those conditions would be able to stand up in court. You can imagine every time a condition is placed on the marches the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, if it objects to it, will likely challenge it in court. We have not been able to see that play out yet.

Q123 Tim Loughton: I am trying to see how this would work in practice. You are potentially placing a huge value judgment on the Met, the senior commanders of the police, to make a judgment about the extent of serious disruption on the community. I see your point. Effectively, you could say that Jewish residents have been unable to access the centre of the capital every Saturday if they are concerned about their safety, but where do you draw that threshold? If a group from a synagogue in north



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London were planning to come to an event in central London and decided they could not because of the marches going on, would that then trigger your proposals for the Met commissioner to say the whole thing is off? Where is the balance?

Lord Walney: Exactly. It is an incredibly difficult judgment for anyone to make. So much of this is balancing different people's rights in different areas and creating the right balance. It is a difficult thing for any police officer, any chief constable of any force, to navigate, particularly if this is an ongoing issue.

One proposal that is being circulated is whether simply resting this on the shoulders of a chief constable of the Met and other forces is sufficient. Could you look at the structure that you have had in Northern Ireland over where parades should go over a prolonged period and should you widen out that decision-making apparatus? That has difficulties in and of itself. None of this is an exact science and none of this is easy. I do not think we should be remotely relaxed about the level of stress that this is putting on particular parts of security and on resources. That is a whole question that we could maybe come back to.

Too often in this place, in the Commons and in the Lords, and with decision makers—because often we come from backgrounds where we have grown up protesting and we have been on marches—the right to protest can sometimes be foremost in our mind to the exclusion of other parts of people's rights to live in security, safety and without fear of intimidation.

Q124 **Tim Loughton:** Before I go to the other witnesses on this, I am trying to work out practically how you would do this. We have heard, and you were listening to the earlier testimony, that this is the biggest series and accumulation of demonstrations that the Met probably has ever had to deal with. It was not just that one million people arrived in one weekend. There have been several hundred thousand or whatever the figure is every Saturday since 9 October. Would it be a practical solution to say, "Okay, you can demonstrate but only once a month" or every other Saturday or something like that?

You also heard that, given the number of people involved, it has been remarkably peaceful and the incidents that constitute hate crime and the arrests subsequently made as a percentage is relatively low. You could point to other demonstrations where there have been many more arrests and charges have been brought. Is it a proportion, an extent, the accumulation issue, so that it is safe—if indeed it is not safe—for somebody from that north London synagogue to come to central London on the second and fourth Saturday of the month but potentially for the first and third there may be a demonstration going on? Is that a way forward, for example?

Lord Walney: Greater spacing could clearly be a practical possibility. There are different parts of the legislation that require imposing of conditions and the exclusion of marches completely. If you were dictating



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on which dates a march could happen you might encounter those complications.

It is important not to simply judge this by the number of arrests. The conversation that you were having with Assistant Commissioner Twist over the tactics of sometimes letting banners go and then putting out pictures on social media to try to bring in offenders afterwards is inherently problematic in that there are many who will escape justice in doing that. I understand the practical considerations of forces potentially becoming overwhelmed but that, for me, ought to be more actively into the mix of whether the marches should be allowed to go ahead in the current form at all. If it is only the case that you can maintain public order on these marches if you are prepared to let completely unacceptable or criminal material go and then appeal for it afterwards, then I would question as to whether these are entirely—

Q125 Tim Loughton: I do not think it is a question of letting those go. It is practically—and the Chair and I saw this on Saturday—when you have approximately 2,000 police and 200,000 demonstrators being able to, first, identify and, secondly, verify. We saw various police officers with screens going through all sorts of flags to check if that was a potentially terrorist-supporting flag or whatever it may be, and then make their way to apprehend that person. There were several cases where they were posing for the cameras and then they had taken their banners down or their bandanas or whatever it might be off. It was difficult to find them on the day, but they were determined to find them if they had an image that they could verify was from that demonstration. I do not think they let them go, but it was a question of when practically they could take action because of the numbers on the day.

Lord Walney: I understand it is difficult, but the main point I was making is that I do not think we should simply judge the level of criminality that is occurring on these demonstrations from the number of arrests. I think there were a significant level of offences above that.

Q126 Tim Loughton: I understand. Dame Sara, how do you think the law should or could be changed?

Dame Sara Khan: I carried out a review of the law specifically looking at hateful extremism and I published a report co-authored with Sir Mark Rowley when he had retired from policing looking at how we felt extremists were able to exploit gaps in legislation. What we were particularly concerned about were those extremists who fell just below the terrorism threshold.

As many of you will remember, Anjem Choudary, for example, very much dominated in this space. For years he was radicalising people. He was linked to around 70 to 100 terrorist attacks both here and in Europe. He was an incredibly dangerous and divisive figure. The authorities at that time repeatedly expressed their frustration at their inability to curtail him just because he had not crossed over into the terrorism threshold, even though he had been clearly inciting hatred, he had been promoting



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antidemocratic views, fuelling anti-Muslim hatred, and creating a range of severe harms to our country. That problem still remains. He was only convicted of terrorism once he professed support for ISIS in 2015 and eventually was convicted.

It is that problem of extremist groups who will always exploit tensions in crisis—we saw that during the pandemic, we have seen that during the conflict in the Middle East—and that playing out here. Every conflict that I have seen in local areas when I have been to visit local authorities, whenever there are tensions you will always see extremists seeking to exploit that tension.

Our report, in effect, highlighted a couple of things. The first was that hateful extremists in our country can operate lawfully, freely and with impunity for several reasons. First, that is because the two areas of law that are most commonly associated with extremist activity is hate crime and terrorism. If you imagine three bubbles, you have hate crime, hateful extremism, and terrorism. There is a slight overlap between those things. So, for example, on the hate crime side Part III and Part 3A of the Public Order Act looks at stirring up hatred; for example, racial and religious hatred. Some of that is the behaviour of hateful extremists and some of it is broader.

On the terrorism side you have issues around the glorification of terrorism. Extremists are very clever in not being caught by terrorist legislation. What we showed, for example, is that in this country it is lawful to glorify terrorism if you do not engage in the encouragement of the commission, preparation or instigation of acts of terrorism. What does that mean in practice? That means that if somebody wanted to praise the actions of terrorists or glorify their ideology, whether it is Thomas Mair who murdered Jo Cox or the 9/11 hijackers or anybody else, they can do that in this country if it is not engaging in the commission, preparation or acts of terrorism. That is pretty shocking. I remember when Sir Mark discovered that how shocking he found that to be, having found himself on the other side of the policing line.

Q127 Tim Loughton: To come back to the limitations, somebody having a placard that basically has pictures and slogans along the lines of, “ Hamas are heroes”, whatever, where does that fall within your definitions?

Dame Sara Khan: If it does not look like they are encouraging acts of terrorism or they are instigating acts of terrorism, that is exactly the line that CT policing has struggled with. That is exactly what they, as operational partners, told us when we carried out the review, that this thing around glorification of terrorism, even though we have heard politicians say glorification of terrorism is an offence in this country, it is if you are instigating, acting, preparing for the course of terrorism, but if you are simply glorifying the actions of terrorists that is legal. That is why this is particularly a problem online because you will see a whole load of material online that falls in the “legal but harmful” category.

Q128 Tim Loughton: The law needs to be changed in order to say that



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somebody carrying a placard on a Saturday demonstration basically saying, “ Hamas are heroes, congratulations on 7 October”, or whatever, clearly glorifying a terrorist organisation that has been proscribed as a terrorist organisation, therefore, should qualify as a criminal act?

Dame Sara Khan: I would hope that most people in this country would think that if you glorify far-right terrorists, Islamist terrorists or anybody else for that matter—to think that that is not illegal in this country I find shocking. Even if somebody wanted to glorify the actions of terrorists to children, by the way, that is lawful as well. That is shocking.

Tim Loughton: I think we would all agree with that, but the question is that the law does need to be changed to close that loophole.

Dame Sara Khan: Yes.

Q129 **Tim Loughton:** Fine. Thank you. Mr Simcox, do you have anything to add or a different take on that?

Robin Simcox: There is definitely a problem somewhere. What we have seen is that in some of the placards, not just on the streets in protest by the way, but some of the content that I see coming out of mosques at the moment specifically, there are radical sentiments being aired with a brazenness that we have not seen for some years. The complication with the legislation, and I am going to speak in broadbrush strokes, is that generally when I speak to lawyers they say the law is fine, but the problem is with how it is being implemented. When we speak to the police they say, “ We do not have the legislation we need to make arrests”, so there seems to be an issue over interpretation. Certainly, from the conversations I have had it is not black and white to me exactly where the problem is.

There has been a general default in the past couple of decades, which has been entirely understandable in many ways because so much of our legislation needed bringing up to date, that our go-to generally at times like this is more legislation. I feel that we are hitting the limits of what we can expect legislation to do. I ultimately do not think we are going to legislate our way out of what I think is an increasingly profound crisis of extremism in this country.

The area where I think there may be something is precisely this one that you are discussing around “ Hamas are heroes” and essentially the celebration of terrorists and acts of terrorism. Whether there is something that the law can do around that is an interesting question to test. All I can relay so far is in my conversations with lawyers and police, and even when I speak to Government Departments, it is not entirely clear where the problem is, whether it is that the legislation is lacking or that it has not been interpreted correctly.

Dame Sara Khan: If I can come back to that with some of the other findings in the report, which are really important, one of the other things that we found that was lawful is that it is legal to incite racial hatred in this country as long as it is not threatening, abusive or insulting. As an



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example, if someone decided to form a neo-Nazi organisation tomorrow and they were regularly praising Adolf Hitler, uploading loads of antisemitic conspiracy theories, glorifying the holocaust and all that type of material, that is lawful in this country if it is not threatening, abusive and insulting.

There are gaps in legislation and they are being used by neo-Nazi and Islamist extremist organisations that have not been proscribed because they do not meet the terrorism threshold; therefore, they do not meet the level of section 3 of the Terrorism Act where the Home Secretary can proscribe those groups. When you have neo-Nazi and Islamist groups that promote the same ideology as violent terrorist groups, the same narratives, the same horrendous extremist conspiracy theories about Muslims, Jews or anybody else for that matter, the fact that we have not dealt with that is creating a permissive environment in this country. We are basically saying, "Go ahead. It is perfectly lawful for you to preach that hatred, both online and offline" and I think that is pretty shocking.

When you look at what other western liberal democracies have done, so if you look at Germany and Canada, they have banned Combat 18, which is a British neo-Nazi organisation. We have not in this country. If you look at Germany they have also banned Hizb ut-Tahrir, an Islamist extremist organisation. I am sure many of you will remember that on one of the earlier protests we did see Hizb ut-Tahrir shouting out, "Jihad, jihad, jihad" in a very provocative way.

The whole argument from the "Operating with Impunity" report was that Government need to recognise that hateful extremism is a distinct activity in its own right. We do not have laws to tackle it because when hate crime and terrorism legislation was designed it was designed to tackle those very specific problems. Hateful extremism is a separate problem.

My view is that we need a separate hateful extremism infrastructure legislation. We must also bear in mind that in the absence of a legal framework we do not have an operational framework. When I have spoken to the national advisers for hate crime, policing, and CT policing, when I have spoken to regulatory bodies such as Ofsted and the Charity Commission, they have all said the same thing, that in the absence of a legal framework they are very limited in what they can do when they see that horrendous extremist material activity.

Q130 Tim Loughton: Sure, but to be fair, to finish, in our discussions with the police last week—and we cannot go into it because some of the cases are sub judice—there are cases where it would appear that the police have arrested and charged people who are effectively conflating Israel and Israel's actions with the holocaust and putting a Star of David side by side with a swastika or whatever. Those charges have not been upheld in a court yet. It will be interesting to see if a court does agree with the police and the CPS in taking that forward. If it does not, then very clearly what you are saying is even more urgent.



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Dame Sara Khan: What is important to realise is that when we talk about Hizb ut-Tahrir, which was regularly putting material about the protests online and talking about the conflict in the Middle East, it is an Islamist extremist organisation. It has been active in this country since 1985. I have seen for myself first hand how it has been radicalising young people. I have spoken to many Muslim parents who are very fearful of Hizb ut-Tahrir and worry that their children are going to be radicalised. I think it is shocking that an antidemocratic organisation such as that is able to operate.

My view is that if the Government had adopted the recommendation that I put forward and we had proscription orders specifically for hateful extremist groups, not as a terrorist group but as a hateful extremist group, we would not have seen them at that march and we would not have seen them engaging in that horrendous behaviour that we did see.

Q131 **Chair:** Dame Sara, have you had a response to your report around hateful extremism?

Dame Sara Khan: I have not had a response from the Government to any of my reports when I was at the Commission for Countering Extremism, which in all honesty I have to say I find baffling. Even more so given that one of the key recommendations made to the Home Secretary in March this year by Sir John Saunders, who carried out the inquiry into the Manchester Arena bombings, was as a matter of urgency to consider and respond to the "Operating with Impunity" report. As far as I am aware, my reports are all sitting on a shelf gathering dust in the Home Office.

To put this in context, one of the things that I wrote in the report was that in Britain we generally have a robust counter-terrorism infrastructure, which many across the world look at with envy. What I stated in my report was that having reviewed the Government's then 2015 counter-extremism strategy, which was not about laws, having now carried out a legal review looking into the gaps in legislation, we do not unfortunately have a robust, strong counter-extremism infrastructure. Instead it is poor, it is weakly co-ordinated and there are serious gaps.

Now, at a time when we need a robust counter-extremism strategy, when we are seeing the impact of the conflict, as Matt Jukes rightly said, when the FBI director has said the warning lights are flashing in the US, when the EU Home Affairs Commissioner stated a couple of days ago that we should expect more terrorist attacks, when the data and the intelligence I have seen is that the scale of radicalisation in this country is going to be unprecedented, it is precisely at this time that we need a robust counter-extremism infrastructure and I am afraid we have the very opposite.

Q132 **Kim Johnson:** Good morning, panel. Lord Walney, you have spoken about what you believe are the impacts on the Jewish community in London. Can you say a bit on what you think are the impacts on the Muslim community as well?



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Lord Walney: There have clearly been reports from Tell MAMA of an increase in anti-Muslim hatred as well. I think there can sometimes be a difficulty when you have what I think is a state of emergency for the scale of hatred that is being experienced by Jewish people, and the level of fear that is being experienced by Jewish people in fearing to walk around, that we always as politicians feel the need to marry that with a comparative statement on what many people would refer to as Islamophobia, to ensure a level of balance, when the specific scale of problem and fear is concentrated at the moment within the Jewish community.

Q133 **Kim Johnson:** We have also heard that there has been a 600% rise in Islamophobia and a rise in the far right, so from your point of view what impact does that have on our diverse communities in this country in terms of fear and hate?

Lord Walney: It is significantly serious and it needs to be taken very seriously. The point that I am trying to make is that I am not sure whether we always do best by any community as politicians in always feeling the need to caveat and treat as equal scales of threat in every incidence when that is not necessarily what is being experienced across the country.

Dame Sara Khan: Could I just give comment on that? As we heard earlier, there is a significant underreporting of Muslims experiencing anti-Muslim hatred and that is something we must take into consideration. In my current role as the Adviser for Social Cohesion and Resilience I have been speaking to a lot of Jewish and Muslim organisations and it is very clear to me that on the side of Muslims there is a great sense of fear. There are many who are experiencing anti-Muslim hatred, people who are just law-abiding citizens getting on with their day-to-day job. I also think there is a real fear of censorship, that when they want to try to legitimately criticise the Israeli Government for their actions in Gaza and they want to talk about the deaths of women and children in Gaza they fear that they will be unfairly and inaccurately labelled as antisemitic, which of course is unacceptable. That is very much playing out in schools and communities.

It is important that we get this very polarised debate right. Of course, people have the right to protest. People have the right to voice their concerns about any Government's policy, whether it is ours, Israel's, Saudi Arabia's or anybody else's for that matter, but at the same time it is trying to balance that with ensuring that people's rights and ability to live freely in this country is protected. It is very difficult, but I do think that it is important that we get better at listening to the fears and concerns within Muslim communities.

Q134 **Kim Johnson:** I just wanted to pick up on counter-terrorism. I think it was discussed in the first session about the number that had been reported to the unit. I was curious in terms of how that is broken down. I know there is a focus on Islamist terrorism at the moment. I know that the review that was published earlier in the year had a major focus on



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Islamist terrorism. Where are we looking at the rise in the far right and what is happening in tackling the far right and looking particularly, Robin maybe, at schools and how children are being criminalised maybe for wearing a Palestinian scarf or making comments? Can you say a bit about that and how that is being dealt with?

Robin Simcox: I am not aware of anybody being criminalised for wearing a Palestinian scarf. If there is different information, I would happily receive it.

The Commission for Countering Extremism focuses on all forms of extremism, so whether that is Islamist extreme right wing, extreme left wing, you name it, we focus on it. The extreme right has obviously been a significant part of that work. It is not overall in terms of the proportion of a terrorist threat, Islamist is still way out in front, but of course it is right that we focus on the extreme right, because even below the terrorism threshold there is the opportunity to divide and polarise societies and disseminate racist and hateful ideology, all the things that everyone in this room has a stake in standing up against.

I have also noticed the extreme right being increasingly cynical and calculated in exploiting issues that are of broader concern, filtering them through an extremist lens and then using that lens to disseminate their message. For example, on a variety of things, and it could be about the recent protests, it could be about immigration, it could be about gender issues, the extreme are latching on to issues that are, when you look at the polling, of broader concern to the country and they are I think being quite calculated in their attempt to use those issues for greater recruitment. I think that makes it incumbent on us all for those issues that the extreme right wing is currently looking to exploit to be able to have sensible conversations around them. If certain topics are shut down and become undiscussable that is when the extreme right wing take advantage, for example on things such as immigration, and can use that and utilise that as a recruitment tool to bring people into their ranks, to increase protests, to increase polarisation and division in communities. That then becomes difficult to unpick.

Q135 **Kim Johnson:** You have just made what I believe is quite an alarming statement about the information and hate crime that is coming out of mosques. Can you expand on that a little to say where you are getting your information? You made it sound as if it were all mosques, so could you give us some information?

Robin Simcox: Absolutely. I can go very directly to sources of things that are being put on YouTube channels, for example, that mosques run. Of course, it is not all mosques. I did not say that and I would never suggest it. I would be more than happy to share this with the Committee in writing wherever it may be. As to some of the content coming out of mosques, I am telling you we must be really wary of some of the sentiments that have been expressed. It is all post 7 October. I know it excites tensions, imaginations and people feel very strongly about this topic, but the sentiments that are being aired are potentially dangerous



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for this country and we should be aware of them. I would be more than happy to share those with the Committee.

Q136 Kim Johnson: Thanks for providing that explanation, Robin. I raised a question with a representative of the CAA last week about hate comments being recorded on their social media sites as well. Are they being policed in the same way?

Robin Simcox: Whether the Campaign Against Antisemitism's social media page is being policed by me?

Kim Johnson: Well, policed in the same way. You mentioned social media and how it is policed in terms of antisemitism, so I wanted to know whether the same level of scrutiny was levelled against other forms of hate speech.

Robin Simcox: Yes, we deal with all forms of extremism. If we are passed content, whether it is from a church, synagogue, temple, wherever it may be, I would treat it all with the exact same level of seriousness.

Q137 Simon Fell: Dame Sara, we were fortunate enough to have you up in Barrow a little while ago and I know you are here under your previous guise, but you currently have quite a big job looking at social cohesion. We tend to look at this through the prism of cities and where the big protests are happening. Could you tell us a bit about how the events of 7 October are working their way through communities and what has changed since then?

Dame Sara Khan: It is important to understand that the tensions that exist in and among some members of the Jewish community and Muslim communities have been there for a long time. Every time there is an incident that happens across Israel and Palestine it always has an impact on our streets here. For example, in May 2021, with the last conflict in Israel and Palestine we saw significant increases in antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, a lot of division, a lot of anger, people feeling censored, all the things we are seeing now, but now is much worse.

One of the things that has struck me is that we can rightly talk about policing and we must talk about policing, but the fact is that those tensions are there. Again, I think that most Jews and Muslims in this country are compassionate and caring. They see each other as brothers and sisters in faith, but there are extremist elements on both sides who want to break down cohesion elements, who do not want us to live in a cohesive society. Trying to focus more of our attention on recognising and addressing those conflicts and doing something about it is important, but from my experience that side of work is always overlooked. Maybe it is because it is not considered as sexy and important as prevention, but that side of work is important because if we spent more effort trying to improve social cohesion—we are trying to reduce the flow of people that the police and the intelligence agencies have to deal with, who are already overstretched and underresourced, so if we spent more effort trying to deal with these early tensions and early conflicts and dealing



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with conflict resolution, taking a more positive and meaningful approach, we would have a much better approach to dealing with some of the extremist sentiments and awful behaviour that we see both online and on our streets.

Q138 Simon Fell: I know your report is due in the new year, soon. I have had constituents reach out to me, and I am sure we all have, who are deeply afraid in the communities they now live in, even though they are not subject to the protests that we see in London or Manchester or wherever it may be. What should we do to reassure them, to strengthen those communities, to provide the cohesion you are talking about?

Dame Sara Khan: About the Israeli-Palestinian conflict or more widely?

Simon Fell: Let us start with Israel and Palestine.

Dame Sara Khan: What I have been very pleased to see are people trying to bring both sides together. They know the debate is very polarised and a lot of the polling we have seen recently has shown that most British people have sympathy on both sides. They do not hold a polarised position. They care about human life on both the Israeli and Palestinian side. I think that speaks to the moderation of the British people.

What has been in one sense frustrating but also pleasing to see is that after a while we have seen people in the middle trying to galvanise people from both sides to come together. We have seen people holding vigils, requesting no banners, no flags, just to come together for a common cause of humanity and peace. That voice and that message is important because when these debates are polarised that is exactly what extremists want to exploit and galvanise on. Trying to create and amplify a much louder voice that is trying to bring two sides together as opposed to giving out divisive rhetoric and terminology, bringing those two sides together, which represents most of the public, is what is needed and what we need to invest more in.

Q139 Simon Fell: Lord Walney, you are looking at political violence. We have seen a huge increase in that post 7 October, but before then as well, let us be honest. We have seen it online driven by social media but we have also seen physical protests now outside the offices of Members of Parliament, as Ms Harris mentioned earlier. Can you talk a bit about your work around that and what recommendations you would be making to the Government around it?

Lord Walney: Of course. I was pleased to see the police officers on the panel before talking about the threat to democracy from the protests outside people's homes, certainly, and the legislation exists to deal with that, but also potentially targeting individual MPs' offices. There is now in the strengthened public order legislation that went through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act increased provision to be able to curtail protests that are intimidating or use high levels of noise. That was controversial at the time and I think not every party in Parliament voted for it, but when you see the effect that this can have on decision making,



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I do not think we talk enough as political people of the pride of being able to protect our liberal parliamentary democracy. You have new legislation that talks about enhanced protection for public spaces. The recent legislation talks about schools and it talks in some detail about vaccine centres. Test and Trace makes it into primary legislation. We do not talk about those functions of being able to carry out decision making, and I think we should relook at that. There is an overwhelming level of channels now where members of the public can make their views heard to those who make decisions on their behalf.

On occasion, people are gathering in a particular place with a view to showing a physical presence that is designed to be intimidating. Look, for example, at the protests that happened on the day of the so-called ceasefire vote outside here, where parliamentarians were leaving this place, and I was among them, and literally having to squeeze through protesters. Part of that was probably mistakes in policing, but it also comes down to that we do not assert in this place the value of protecting the decision-making process.

Q140 **Simon Fell:** On that, do you think we need new powers or is it better use of the existing powers?

Lord Walney: I would like to see greater understanding and communication of the existing powers in being able to curtail protests that are designed to be intimidating and having MPs' offices and other decision-making bodies, councils potentially, in the frame for that. There is also a case—and I am thinking about this carefully and I would welcome the Committee's views on this—whether those new powers of enhanced protection for public spaces, which is targeted at the moment on schools and vaccine facilities, could be extended to places that are vital for democratic decision making. It could be elected council chambers, Parliament or MPs' offices.

Q141 **Simon Fell:** There are also other bodies that are not political but which are, at a time like this, intrinsically linked to the debate we are having. We have seen, for instance, arms manufacturers being targeted by certain protest groups and being disrupted, their employees and production put at risk. Can you talk a bit about that and perhaps some of the recommendations you would be making around that?

Lord Walney: This sits squarely within unacceptable political violence, where you have an organisation such as Palestine Action, which is the most prominent at the moment, whose strategic mode of trying to force change is to target defence manufacturers that it believes are in some way associated in some often very tangential ways with Israel, or even suppliers to those organisations, or human resources, one person, individuals, being targeted at home. That organisation very explicitly uses criminal damage, yet there is no effective method at the moment of being able to place sanctions or proscribing that in legislation.

If you look at the proscription under terrorism and you look at the bar that is being placed on that, it is very high. You can understand why



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Ministers would not go there. I am actively looking at whether there could be effectively a new and different category of proscription or certainly a way of being able to place significant restrictions on an organisation that very openly advocates breaking the law to get its way. You can say, "I am a member of this", or, "I am a leader of this organisation", and you can try to fundraise openly for this organisation, which is explicitly there to smash up and, as you say, potentially endanger the lives of workers, certainly to threaten people, and to prohibit the actions of a democratically elected Government. For example, one of the knock-on effects of what Palestine Action is doing could be to inhibit the vitally needed supply chain to go to the frontline in Ukraine. That is unacceptable.

The hate crime, should you strengthen it, is a difficult area and it can capture things you do not want to capture. It needs to be thought about. This for me is much simpler. They are committing criminal damage, avowedly. We should make it harder for them to do that.

Q142 **Chair:** Is there anything else you would like to say to the Committee that you have not had a chance to say? Dame Sara, is there anything you would like to say to us that you think we should be aware of?

Dame Sara Khan: It is important that we understand the wider extremist context in this country. Of course, today we are talking about the protests. Tomorrow it will be something else that extremists have exploited and then galvanised on. Until we improve the current counter-extremism infrastructure, we are not well placed to deal with the most awful and dangerous actors who seek to undermine cohesion, who seek to undermine the democratic rights and freedoms of our democracy and other people.

When Sir Mark and I did the review, we thought it was important to not be afraid to go back into the legislation discussion. As many of you will remember, when David Cameron was Prime Minister he announced an extremism Bill that never saw the light of day. That was largely because of the inability to come up with an extremism definition, the inability to be very clear on what activity or behaviour you are concerned about, and to narrow down that activity and behaviour that you think needs to be proscribed and legislated on.

What our report tried to do was to describe that behaviour and to show, unlike the attempts in 2015, that there is a way of clamping down on extremist behaviour, but to do so in a way that respects civil liberties and freedom of expression. That is what we sought to do with this report, to show that you could square the extremism circle. We highlighted how, for example, the use of Article 17 of schedule 1 to the Human Rights Act is a very muscular article. It basically prohibits the abuse of the fundamental rights and freedoms of our democracy and gives states a robust tool to do precisely that, to make sure that extremist groups do not use democracy to undermine our democracy. We have not used that approach.



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Our whole approach was to say that we need a new approach to counter-extremism in this country. We are behind the curve. Extremism has changed dramatically in the last 10 years, from social media to the tactics of extremists, and unfortunately we do not have an infrastructure that has caught up with that. It is important that the Government now focus on improving our wider counter-extremism infrastructure, not just to reduce the threat of terrorism but to clamp down on those extremist organisations that are fundamentally antidemocratic and want to promote an antidemocratic world view and create that wider culture of radicalisation.

Q143 Chair: Thank you. I think we have the message very loud and clear there, so thank you for that. Robin Simcox, is there anything else you would like to add?

Robin Simcox: I would like to quickly say something on the protests, because we have talked a lot about rights in the previous panel and the panels you did last week talked a lot about the competing rights and, of course, there is the right to protest. When you have repeated large-scale disruptions in major cities for a significant amount of time I would argue that at some point that balance where Jewish people, for example, must feel safe to go into a city begins to shift. I know, and it has been repeated several times, that most of the people coming to these marches are doing so with peaceful intent and I do not disagree, but recently I have heard chants to globalise the intifada. I have a pretty good idea of what that means, what that looks like. We saw it on 7/7, we saw it in the Bataclan in Paris in 2015, we saw it in Manchester Arena. We know what that looks like.

The right to protest, yes, but is it a right to protest in the centre of London every week to ensure that Jewish people, many Jewish people, do not feel safe to go there? I am not convinced. We should not accept any minority being made to feel unsafe in our capital city, whether it is black people, Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, whoever it may be, and we should not accept it with Jewish people either.

Lord Walney: I would like to make a final point on resources. I thought the police officer spoke very powerfully of the level of stress that this is putting on them. At the moment this is an open-ended level of stress that clearly has, in the medium term, implications on whether they can meet expectations in other vital areas of policing.

I have read the transcript of your previous session and I saw that the representative of the PSC was making an analogy of football fans and how you would not hold a football club responsible for what a minority of fans did after the game. I was surprised to see that, because I was thinking of the same analogy, but the opposite is true. You do hold the football club responsible for the disorder that a minority of fans perpetrate on the community. We should be thinking about that.

The other thing is that organisers of big events like concerts and sporting events pay or certainly significantly contribute to the policing costs. There



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must be an answer to this, because if this goes on then you are going to drain the police of resources. You cannot constantly take away people's leave. At some point it must be filled. There are many ways in which people can make their views heard. If the organisations continue to insist on particularly resource-heavy ways, I think a conversation on how you finance that is going to be important.

Dame Sara Khan: Can I make one final point? The issue of these protests is difficult and complicated. Over the weekend we saw the police claim, I think, that the protests have cost so far around £20 million. There are a lot of implications. I think it is also worth the Committee considering what the consequences are if we do ban these protests. One of the major concerns I would have is that denying people the ability to protest could possibly fuel further radicalisation. If you deny people legal and lawful means to protest in this country, I worry that will make some people on the more extreme end commit more violent and illegal means to make their voice and views heard. That is something that should be taken into consideration. That is not going to lessen the work of the police, counter-terrorism policing or MI5. Looking at it in the whole, looking at the consequences if we do ban protests, what does that mean for our democracy and wider social cohesion and other issues?

Chair: Thank you. On that point it just shows the complexity of this issue. Thank you very much for attending today. This has been a helpful session and certainly will inform our report, which we hope to produce in the new year. Thank you very much for all your time today.