

Executive Summary

This report documents the policing of protests in opposition to the genocide in Gaza and in solidarity with Palestine between October 2023 and October 2024 in Scotland, showing how fundamental rights to free speech, assembly, and protest are being eroded.³

While mainstream political rhetoric in Scotland condemned the genocide and rejected Westminster's description of pro-Palestine marches as 'hate marches', the reality of policing approaches used against pro-Palestine protests in Scotland paints a very different picture.

Drawing on first-hand testimonies, legal observer notes, court records, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and media analysis, our report reveals incidents of extreme police violence, the repeated misuse of police powers, and intimidatory and discriminatory policing. In some cases, the level of police violence used against demonstrators was described as a "threat to life".

In the period October 2023 to October 2024, the police response to pro-Palestine protests in Scotland became increasingly intimidatory, violent and unpredictable. This included particular variations geographically, with Glasgow protests experiencing especially high police numbers and aggression at pickets compared to other cities.

Police Scotland spent £90,409.30 on policing pro-Palestine protests in one month, from November 9th 2023 to December 10th 2023. This figure is the best indication of monthly costs we have from the force, and would equate to well over £1 million annually if costs were consistently at that level.

The interests of private companies were repeatedly prioritised over the right to protest and the safety of protestors. Peaceful pickets at Thales were violently broken to enable companies to resume business and police cited company operations rather than legislation to justify the intervention.

Protestors experienced the most violent policing at pickets of companies linked to the genocide, and police actions have been described by eyewitnesses as a "threat to life". This included the use of batons, PAVA (pepper) spray and indiscriminate violence, with numerous injuries sustained and protestors prevented from access to medical care. The violence was exceptionally brutal at pickets outside the arms company Thales and Govan Cross Subway Station in Glasgow.

Journalists and legal observers were actively obstructed, threatened with arrest and subjected to police violence, undermining vital mechanisms for police monitoring and accountability.

Protestors and legal observers reported severe psychological harm in the aftermath of police violence. This was often compounded by the lack of police accountability in such instances, with no police misconduct or disciplinary proceedings relating to these events on record.

In response to our requests for data, Police Scotland have withheld and refused key information about the policing of Palestine solidarity protests pertaining to the costs of operations, the number of injuries sustained and the use of PAVA spray and batons.

There was an increase in the deployment of hate crime legislation and counter-terrorism laws to police Palestine solidarity protests, in the period before (and creating a context for) the proscription of Palestine Action in July 2025. These were evoked to try and regulate chants, signs and speeches, and to stop people at border entry points.

Marches and demonstrations were subject to excessive restrictions and people perceived as key organisers faced intimidation and targeted arrest for organising 'illegal' demonstrations. FOI data shows a fourfold rise in these kinds of charges (under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982) from 2022-23 to 2023-24.

Protestors experienced racist policing, with eyewitnesses highlighting the racist treatment of Muslim people, racialised legal observers and Palestinian protestors in particular. This was further evidenced through FOI requests and analysis about the use of hate crime and counter-terror legislation.

Surveillance and intelligence-gathering was extensive and intrusive; including the use of Forward Intelligence Teams (FIT), Evidence Gathering Teams (EGT), Police Liaison Officers (PLO), drones, and bodycams. The use of drones has been formally denied by Police Scotland, despite multiple eyewitness testimonies detailing the use of drones.

Overall, the policing of Palestine solidarity in Scotland from October 2023 to 2024 shows a growing suppression of dissent. To safeguard rights to free speech, assembly and protest, an honest understanding of the role that police play in stifling and repressing movements for justice is needed. The police must not be perceived as an impartial arbiter of public order, but must be recognised as a political force in Scotland which in recent years has tried to obstruct a movement against genocide.

Building the movement to defend these rights necessitates not just documentation and analysis - as we hope this report provides - but collective organising, education and agitation, to ensure that solidarity with the people of Palestine can be sustained and effective.



NET POL The Network for Police Monitoring