



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEFING: SPECIAL EDITION ON PALESTINE



CAGE International is an independent advocacy organisation that aspires to a just world. We challenge War on Terror inspired state oppression and empower communities to dismantle the discourses and policies of the global War on Terror.

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Introduction

It has been 75 years since the devastating events of the Nakba and the Israeli occupation of Palestine. After decades of apartheid and constant violations of international law in full view of the world, Israel is currently waging its most violent programme of genocide and ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian people.

From the outset of this conflict, the Zionist state has garnered unwavering support from Western governments, notably the United States. This backing extends beyond military and political realms, manifesting in domestic support to Zionist lobbies and pro genocide narratives. It is within this backdrop that CAGE publishes this report into the role of European powers in stifling Palestine solidarity. This “European Policy Briefing: Special Edition on Palestine” aims to shed light on the systematic domestic repression orchestrated by European governments.

This report is driven by three overarching themes:

- To highlight the pattern of repression: We dissect European policies towards Palestine, revealing a consistent pattern of repression and censorship. This analysis aims to bring these injustices to light.
- To encourage further investigation: We provide an analysis for researchers and analysts to build upon, deepening the understanding of European policies both at the State level and also international institutional level.
- To empower civil society: We aim to provide information that civil society organisations and activists can utilise enabling them to exchange knowledge and also challenge injustice effectively.

Each country-specific section offers insights into domestic policies and actions, that connect to an overarching view of the way European governments have chosen to respond to the Gaza genocide.

From Paris to Berlin, an array of similar anti Palestinian measures has been enforced ranging from ban on demonstrations to criminalisation of the Palestinian flag and phrases such as ‘from the river to the sea Palestine will be free.’

Nevertheless, Palestinian supporters have remained steadfast in their support, running the risk of being fined, harassed, violently arrested and sometimes taken into custody by authorities throughout Europe.

As a follow up to this briefing, CAGE International will soon publish a toolkit on how to resist this crackdown and continue to show solidarity with Palestine.

Muhammad Rabbani
Managing Director
CAGE International

France

Government Responses to Protests Against Israeli Aggression

- French PM delivered a speech in Parliament where she described the operation as terrorism and savagery. She declared that ["no act of antisemitism" would be tolerated.](#)
- The Ministry of the Interior announced that every pro-Palestine demonstration would be banned.
- The Ministry of Justice published a [guideline](#) according to which any support for Palestine is to be labelled as support for terrorism needing a strong judicial response. Interior Minister implied it would closely monitor grassroots organisations and would severely sanction any expression of support for the Palestinian liberation struggle.
- As a result of these intimidations, the head of a Muslim media was raided and questioned by the police as he tweeted in support of Palestine. The grassroots movement "Indigenous Party" was threatened by the Interior Ministry to be dissolved. Pro-Palestine supporters defied the ban to protest and held some improvised gatherings: police verbalised, arrested and fined some of the supporters for their presence in these banned gatherings.
- Maria De Cartena, Legal and Political Adviser at Perspectives Musulmanes, [explained](#) that France banned pro Palestinian protests for a decade arguing they were a threat to public order and a vector of antisemitism. She stated that authorities arrested thousands of protestors and took some of them into custody. De Cartena added that on 28 October at the Paris demonstration, authorities fined 1359 protesters for participating in an unauthorised protest. She said the Government threatened all non French citizens with deportation in the case they would attend an unauthorised pro Palestine protest.

Political pressure forces French authorities to reverse its ban

- After a decade-long ban on pro-Palestine marches or demonstrations, French authorities overturned their decision because of two concomitant factors:
 - (1) Domestic and international political pressure significantly increased due to the substantial support the Palestinian struggle received.
 - (2) Its decision to systematically ban every march was declared [illegal](#) by the Supreme Court.

Strategic Analysis

- Departing from its "Arab Policy" - a postcolonial battle for hearts and minds aimed at seducing the Muslim masses and convincing them of France's benevolent disposition toward their political development - and in accordance with its new plan in the near-East, France firmly sided with the Zionist regime, becoming complicit with genocide. After 7 October most political parties—including the far-right and the ruling coalition—marched in the streets of Paris "for the Republic and against antisemitism," a frame used to depoliticize the conflict in Palestine and legitimize the criminalization of pro-Palestinian expressions.
- Despite some minor humanitarian announcements and a late call for [a ceasefire](#), France's self-proclaimed credibility in the Muslim world as a trusted champion has been exposed by its total alignment with Israel and criminalization of Palestine's support.
- Having lost its self-delusional reputation in the Muslim world, the French government's natural reaction will lead to the use of additional repressive powers over its Muslim subjects and to the opposition of foreign Muslim actors responsible for its strategic ruin. It will fully embrace a reinvigorated anti-Islamic rhetoric. Islamophobia—both domestic and international—will be strategically stoked.

France Protests



Denmark

Government Responses to Protests Against Israeli Aggression

- On 7 October the Danish Prime Minister responded to the Al Aqsa Flood Operation by writing on her [social media accounts](#) that Denmark stands behind Israel and that it was “yet another pointless attack on Israel”.
- The Prime Minister has [stated](#) that she wants to examine whether pro-Palestinian protests encourages terrorism. On 9 November she addressed a [letter](#) to the Minister of Justice, Peter Hummelgaard, claiming that she has witnessed “disturbing behaviour in Denmark that is fueled by the conflict”, which “clearly shows that there are people in Denmark who have not embraced our Danish values”. She requested that the “Ministry of Justice prepare a report on how the police and prosecutors use the criminal law protection against, among other things, incitement to and approval of terrorism, etc. in connection with the recent demonstrations and public statements in relation to the conflict in Israel and Gaza.”
- Amani Hassani, Researcher at CEDA, [adds](#) that one of the two people was charged with terrorism for voicing his support to Palestinian armed struggle. She explained that the framework of free speech in Denmark is vague and impacts pro palestinian activism. She highlights how Denmark uses soft power to crack down on pro palestinian solidarity. Amani explains how anything seen as criticism of Israel’s aggression can be qualified as antisemitism. She says that consequences for criticising Israel’s range from a fine to a 2 to 4 years jail sentence with terrorism charges.
- According to the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (PET) and the Danish government, [social media](#) as well as the [protests are being closely monitored](#). According to the State narrative, expressions of support for the Palestinian struggle can lead to “radicalization” among Muslim Danish communities.
- A Danish politician from the Liberal Alliance, has [criticised](#) several researchers and experts that signed a letter back in 2021, saying that Israel is an Apartheid-state and encouraging people to boycott Israel. The politician claims that the 35 signatories cannot be used as “experts” on Middle East issues, as they are not sufficiently objective and neutral to explain what is going on in the region. After viewers complained to Denmark’s national public service company, an editor from DR wrote a [statement](#) emphasising that one specific expert would only be featured in news segments on the situation in Palestine/Israel with a declaration of his previous political views on the conflict. An MP from the Social Democrats has also [criticised](#) an academic who is an expert on militant ‘Islamist’ movements, for trying to bring nuance to Hamas.

Criminalising Palestinian support through a CVE compass

- In the [report](#) by the Minister of Justice, he stated that the Danish Security and Intelligence Service has found it necessary to issue new operational recommendations to the Danish police, stating: “Developments in the conflict in Israel and Gaza have created a renewed focus on this [i.e. security for Jewish and Israeli interests], which has led PET to prepare a number of operational recommendations to the police on, among other things, increased attention to security around Israeli, Jewish and Palestinian interests and activities in Denmark”. So far, the police have filed two charges of [terrorism](#) offenses towards pro-Palestinian statements.

Denmark Protests



Spain

Government Responses to Protests Against Israeli Aggression

- On 14 October the Spanish Prime Minister's office expressed its strong support for Israel, [stating](#): "Spain is a lover of peace. That is why we condemn, emphatically and without any ambiguity, the terrorist attack by Hamas in Israel and the deaths of Israelis. We demand the urgent release of the hostages and with the same forcefulness we defend that Israel has the right to defend itself"

By the end of November, he visited the Middle East [to negotiate peace and to announce its purpose to officially recognize Palestine](#) and push for the "two state solution". At the same time of these declarations, it emerged that [the Ministry of Defense finalised the contract for 1,680 Spike LR2 missiles for almost 290 million euros to the company Pap Tecnos](#), a Spanish subsidiary of an Israeli Defence company.

Preventing Muslim immigration: a Spanish "Muslim Ban" in the making?

- The extreme right VOX party, uses the ongoing genocide to propose [an initiative that Congress must vote on](#) to "urge the Government to suspend the processing of files for the acquisition of Spanish nationality, authorizations for stay and residence, and prohibit the entry of immigrants from countries of Islamic culture, as long as their integration can be ensured"
- Madrid's right wing governing coalition formed by PP and Vox responds to the numerous and constant pro-Palestine demonstrations and marches in the capital: ["Madrid approves granting Israel its municipal Medal of Honor at the proposal of Vox and in the midst of the invasion of Gaza"](#).
- Former Spanish Social Rights Minister and head of the left wing Podemos party [Ione Belarra has repeatedly and publicly accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza](#). On 21 November, [Belarra was removed from the Government](#).

Spain Protests



Netherlands

Government Responses to Protests Against Israeli Aggression

- After the 7 October attacks, the Dutch government firmly voiced its unconditional support for Israel. There's speculation that Prime Minister Mark Rutte's steadfast pro-Israel stance could be influenced by his aspirations to be [NATO's next secretary-general](#). Yet, in the broader international arena, notably among key U.S. lawmakers, Rutte's recognition remains modest.
- This position, however, faces substantial pushback from the public, influential figures, and a considerable portion of the media, marking a discernible shift in public sentiment towards an anti-Israel viewpoint.
- The war on Gaza resulted in [a landslide win for Wilder's right wing party of freedom \(PVV\)](#). The party gained voters by promising a harsh approach on Muslims and Islam and unconditional support for Israel.
- The Dutch government faces legal challenges for providing Israel with fighter jet parts and its tolerance towards citizens joining the IDF.
- A parliamentarian from the Denk party was told he is prohibited to repeat the phrase '[from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free](#)' in the chamber again. Despite the fact that the judiciary decision deemed the chant lawful.
- Students of the Leiden university staging a spontaneous teach-in were escorted out of the campus and then followed by security service members, far into the city.
- The Ettouhied mosque in Rotterdam was vandalised, this comes after their imam was accused of supporting Hamas in a friday sermon.
- Students of various primary schools claim to have been warned against engaging in pro-palestine activism.

Netherlands Protests



Germany

Government Responses to Protests Against Israeli Aggression

- The Hamas action of 7 October, as well as Israel's attack on the Gaza Strip whipped up the Islamophobic sentiment across the country, nurturing essentializing tropes according to which antisemitism is part and parcel of Islam. Furthermore, according to these narratives, antisemitism in Germany is an imported form of hatred stemming from the Muslim masses. Criticism of the state of Israel is thereby also widely codified as antisemitic.
- The head of Germany's Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution Thomas Haldenwang, names antisemitism as part of the DNA of "Islamist" structures. The mayor of the Berlin district of Neukölln [echoed this position](#): "Antisemitism in the Arab population has grown with the mosque associations and the activities of many imams who preach hatred against Israel"

Criminalising support for Palestine, problematizing Muslim Immigration

- Expressions of solidarity with Palestine are routinely branded as antisemitism and extremism, a deliberate attempt to stifle dissent and quash any discourse that challenges the status quo.
- Under the guise of public security and order, [numerous pro-Palestinian demonstrations were banned](#), renowned activists were expelled, cultural institutions were pressurized. Demonstrators at authorised rallies report racial profiling and an increase in arrests of Arab-looking men. Earlier in the year, a rally to mark the 75th anniversary of the Nakba was banned.

- Germany [banned](#) "Samidoun", a Palestinian solidarity network founded in 2012, that advocates for the release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jail. This ban not only halts the organisation's operations but also serves as a tool for the German state to prosecute Pro-Palestine activists. It's a familiar playbook, a strategy consistently employed by states to first ban and then exploit legal avenues against protesters and activists. As a consequence of this ban, German police led numerous raids across five federal states, targeting members and supporters of Samidoun. According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior, more than 20 properties were searched during these operations.
- Friedrich März, head of the CDU (Christian Social Union, the second largest party in Germany and belonging to the conservative spectrum) demands that commitment to supporting Israel must become a prerequisite for citizenship. In addition, Muslim associations should only be part of the official discourse with state organisations if they recognise Israel's right to exist.
- At an [online conference](#) organised by CAGE International on 12 December 2023, former Samidoun's Coordinator Zaid Abdunnasser described how Germany has been criminalising pro Palestinian support since 2022. Abdunnasser stated Germany banned demonstrations for the Nakba day in the State of Berlin. He added the State also held a conference attended by German Ministers during which they shared a report called "Israel related antisemitism". This report provided Ministers with recommendations including the ban of organisations, the use of IHRA definition of antisemitism, the criminalisation of the slogan 'from the river to the sea Palestine will be free', as well as carrying a map of Palestine as an expression of antisemitism.

Germany Protests



Government Responses to Protests Against Israeli Aggression

- [Prime Minister Rishi Sunak expressed the UK's "unequivocal" and "unqualified support in the face of evil"](#), implicitly supporting Netanyahu's call for "mighty vengeance". Though no demonstration has been banned to date there has been a clear and noticeable increase in repression of demonstrations since October, with police emboldened by the climate nurture by the government's Islamophobic stances.
- From the very outset of the Israeli assault on Gaza, Home Office had been at the forefront of attempts to criminalise Palestine solidarity demonstrations, and to push the Metropolitan police to ban the mass national demonstrations in London. This led to an [escalating back and forth between Metropolitan Police chief Mark Rowley](#) and the government, each effectively goading the other to exercise their respective powers to clamp down on Palestine demonstrations.
- The global response to the unfolding genocide in Palestine witnessed millions participating in protests, particularly in the UK, with displays of solidarity ranging from school children wearing Palestine pin badges to social media activism. However, this surge in support was met with a full spectrum attack on civil liberties.
- Our report ["Censoring Palestine, From Schools to Workplaces"](#) analyses the growing censorship and repression of Palestine solidarity in the UK following Israel's ongoing brutal attack on the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian people. Propaganda and misinformation are highlighted, debunking false claims made by the Israeli state, including debunked allegations such as babies being hung on clotheslines or burned in ovens.
- The report chronicles a surge in cases of repression, with 214 instances documented between October 9, 2023, and December 14, 2023, marking a 455% increase since the 2021 report.
- The breakdown of cases encompasses schools/colleges (118), workplaces (35), universities (13), mosques (13), and protests (35). Schools witnessed a variety of repressive measures, including exclusions, suspensions, and Prevent referrals, while workplaces imposed terminations and investigations for pro-Palestine expressions. Universities engaged in criminal investigations, suspensions, and digital attendance for pro-Palestinian students. Mosques faced police and charity commission investigations, and protests resulted in arrests under the Terrorism Act 2000.
- The suppression of Palestine solidarity is also contextualised within the broader framework of anti-Apartheid or anti-Semitic allegations, as schools, workplaces, and universities adopted double standards in comparison to expressions of solidarity for other causes.
- Islamophobia, racism, and discrimination play a pervasive role, with 209 out of 214 cases involving Muslim clients. This has led to a normalisation of Islamophobia, as individuals expressing solidarity with Palestine are labelled as 'terrorists'.
- Escalating trends of repression in the UK, extending beyond schools to workplaces, public spaces, and hospitals have been noted.

Attempts at banning pro-Palestine demonstrations fail as Pro-Palestine political pressure reaches unparalleled heights

- Braverman, as standard bearer of the Conservative Party's hard-right in the Cabinet, had used her position to whip up anger at Palestine demonstrations and had unsuccessfully tried - along with Sunak - to convince the Metropolitan police to request a ban on the 11th November demonstration under existing laws.

- Suella Braverman [was sacked](#) from her role as Home Secretary by Rishi Sunak on 13 November, and replaced by former Foreign Secretary James Cleverly - whose previous role was filled by former Prime Minister David Cameron, in a surprise return to frontline politics.
- This followed her publication of an [unauthorised op-ed criticising](#) the police response to Palestine solidarity demonstrations, in the lead up to the national demonstration of 11 November, the day before Armistice Day. In it, she claimed that *'there is a perception that senior police officers play favourites when it comes to protesters'* - i.e. that the police are supposedly overly sympathetic to Palestine demonstrations, as well as Black Lives Matter demonstrations, and failing to discharge their duties properly.
- Braverman's statements in the lead up to the 11 November demonstration, posing the demonstration as an attack of Armistice Day and war remembrance, were also widely understood as an incitement to the far-right to attack and provoke Palestine demonstrators on the day - which was indeed heeded by various far-right forces on the day - and to possibly give the police a rationale to ban future demonstrations.

With her op-ed critiquing the police, it was evident that Braverman had crossed the line in this escalation, and risked damaging the relationship between the government and the agency. Moreover, the demonstrations' success and global awareness on the ongoing genocide made her proposals untenable, even for a western pro-Zionist regime like the UK.

UK Protests



Austria

Government Responses to Protests Against Israeli Aggression

- Following Operation Al-Aqsa Flood, [Austria's political class](#) showcased a unanimous response in solidarity with the apartheid state of Israel. All five parliamentary parties in Austria issued a joint condemnation of the Al-Aqsa flood, accompanied by a striking display of the Israeli flag on the Chancellor's Office and the Foreign Ministry buildings, noteworthy is the fact that Austria is a neutral country.
- [Chancellor Nehammer's solidarity visit to Israel](#), where he engaged in discussions with Israeli leaders, underscores Austria's commitment to expanding cooperation with Israel. Nehammer prioritised advocating for more support for Israel, positioning it as the "sole democracy in the region." This commitment, he asserted, gained increased significance after the events of October 7th, making it Austria's top priority. Nehammer explicitly rejected neutrality in the supposed 'fight against terrorism'.
- Austria decided to [halt development aid to Palestinians, amounting to about 19 million euros](#). Foreign Minister Alexander Schallenberg justified this move as a response to October 7th. Palestinian Ambassador Salah Abdel Shafi, sees it as a [collective punishment against the Palestinian](#) population and an implicit endorsement of Israel's aggressive policies.
- [Austria voted "No"](#) to a UN resolution for an "urgent, durable, and permanent humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza."

Austrian Government crackdown on pro-Palestinian solidarity

- The [Austrian government's prolonged attempt to investigate an Operation Luxor survivor](#), over the past two decades, accusing him of financially supporting Hamas, which is proscribed, through Austrian associations, in a move to criminalise charity organisations aiding Palestinians, has yielded no results. His Operation Luxor case was closed in February 2023. Now the Austrian state shifted the focus of the investigation to financial wrongdoing.
- The Operation Luxor raids, intended to quell pro-Palestinian activism, resulted in no charges or arrests. However, after 7 October, the [media exploited the event](#) to suppress pro-Palestinian solidarity.
- In early November, a person related to an Operation Luxor survivor faced a violent home raid. The evidence presented against him consisted of Social Media posts on the Palestinian cause.
- [During an emergency cabinet meeting](#), Interior Minister Karner suggested an inclination toward stronger law enforcement actions against anti-Israel demonstrations. [Resulting](#) to a total of 70 police reports during pro-Palestinian demonstrations, 50 were related to the use of the slogan "From the river to the sea - Palestine will be free," 400 administrative reports, 10 arrests, and 13 assemblies were prohibited, as per official numbers.
- In an effort to recast pro-Palestinian solidarity as antisemitism, Interior Minister Karner emphasised a zero-tolerance policy for antisemitism. He revealed an ongoing coordination between the police, security agencies, and the Israelitische Kultusgemeinde (IKG - the Orthodox Jewish representative body) for necessary security measures. The IKG, is using this security dialogue to advocate for the banning of the phrase "From the river to the sea - Palestine will be free"

- While claiming there is [currently no specific threat](#), Karner calls for additional surveillance capabilities, citing the need for unspecified changes in certain areas. The decision to raise the terrorism threat level and heighten police protection of Jewish institutions is being used as a pretext for pushing policy reforms allowing the [surveillance of encrypted chat services](#). And in collaboration with national defence, an anti-terrorism centre has been opened, and both the visible and covert presence of security forces in public spaces has been increased.
- Vice Chancellor [Werner Kogler's call for intensified surveillance of mosques](#) and "friendly organisations" which constitutes an overreach and the targeting of the muslim community. Chancellor [Nehammer's appeal to citizens to report individuals beginning to "radicalise"](#) is likely to be construed as encouraging surveillance, contributing to a broader trend of eroding privacy rights.
- The Annual Vienna Forum, organised by the Austrian government and involving 10 EU nations, poses a pan-European threat. It aims to establish a coalition of elites promoting Islamophobia across Europe, endorsed by selected experts. This year's agenda focused on securitizing Pro-Palestinian solidarity, potentially empowering Islamophobic states and escalating suppression of Palestinian voices, and activism in Europe.
- The [Austrian government has implemented educational](#) content under the guise of Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) initiatives, aiming to mold the narrative surrounding the Israeli occupation and the ongoing Palestinian genocide, in schools. These educational materials encourage teachers to advocate for the government's stance on the matter. Muslim students holding opposing views are at risk of being labelled as radicalised, extremists, or being referred to repressive CVE programs
- [Austrian Integration Fund has partnered with islamophobic Ahmed Mansour](#) to create special serious of the existing [obligatory](#) "value courses" for male arab asylum seekers, where he will ensure the criminalization of pro-palestinian solidarity. Ahmed Mansour has devoted his career to securitizing pro-Palestinian solidarity, muslim youth and arab men.

Legislative changes, criminalising Pro-Palestinian solidarity in Austria

- Interior Minister Gerhard Karner, a member of the ruling Austrian People's Party (ÖVP), is actively considering [legal amendments targeting the burning or misuse of symbols](#), particularly flags. This initiative comes in response to recent incidents, including the [attempted removal of an Israeli flag from the Vienna City Temple's facade](#) by intoxicated individuals.
- Chancellor Karl Nehammer, [during his solidarity visit to Israel](#), has announced plans to ban the phrase "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." This move indicates the Austrian government's intent to regulate certain expressions associated with pro-Palestinian sentiments.
- The [Austrian government has approved a reform of the Prohibition Act](#), which would include harsher punishments, as a response to the events of 7 October. Justice Minister Alma Zadic (Greens) said in the press briefing that the amendment is necessary to be even more efficient and consistent against amongst others antisemitism. Given that the Austrian government equates pro-palestinian solidarity and Israel criticisms with antisemitism, this reform can have an impact on suppressing pro-Palestinian solidarity and could be exploited to stifle advocacy for Palestinian rights, limiting free speech on the Palestinian cause.

Austria Protests





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