

**Statement by Mental Health Practitioners
on the hunger strike undertaken by members of Palestine Action
*Heba Muraishi, Kamran Ahmed, Teuta Hoxha, Lewie Chiaramello,
Qesser Zuhrah, Amu Gib, Umar Khalid and Jon Cink*
These brave hunger strikers must not be silenced**

We write as Mental Health Practitioners to protest the callous, punitive and unlawful treatment by the UK government of the Palestine Action hunger strikers, many of whom face being remanded in custody for over eighteen months before being brought to trial. We also challenge the politically motivated media silence regarding their action.

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/medialse/2025/12/19/the-uk-medias-silence-on-the-palestine-action-activists-hunger-strikes-is-a-deliberate-editorial-choice/>

More than eight hundred medical practitioners signed a letter to Justice Secretary David Lammy on December 18th 2025, warning of the medical emergency faced by these young prisoners.

<https://www.palestinedeepdive.com/p/dont-let-them-die>

We collectively endorse this letter, add our voices of moral outrage and draw attention to the psycho-social dimensions of the hunger strikers' treatment at the hands of the Department of Justice.

First of all, the decision to refuse food requires an extraordinary degree of courage, steadfastness, and commitment to withstand both chronic and acute pain and debilitation. The hunger strikers are at different stages of starvation with two, Heba Muraishi and Kamran Ahmed, having reached an absolutely critical stage at over sixty days without food. Others have either had to stop or take a break from the strike. All, however, face devastating long term impacts on their health and well being.

Hunger striking, the willingness to put one's own body on the line, to risk one's health and ultimately one's life for a cause is never undertaken lightly, despite government attempts to trivialize this particular action. It is a weapon of last resort for those facing overwhelming inequities of power, whose legitimate rights are trampled upon, whose political concerns are ignored and whose campaign is deliberately silenced.

As well as medical doctors, UN Special Rapporteurs have expressed profound concerns about the treatment of these hunger strikers, including reported delays in accessing medical care, use of excessive restraint during hospital treatment, denial of contact with family members and legal counsel, and lack of consistent independent medical oversight.

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/12/un-experts-urge-uk-protect-lives-and-rights-pro-palestinian-detainees-hunger>

Minister of Justice David Lammy has repeatedly refused requests by the legal representatives of the hunger strikers to meet and discuss their demands, despite being urged by MP's and reprimanded by the speaker of the House of Commons.

As well as direct health impacts, hunger striking has massive psychological implications both for the individuals concerned and for their families, friends, comrades and loved ones. Those dear to them have been deprived of regular communication at this critically vulnerable time. The effects of this isolation are hard for all to bear. As Mental health practitioners we respect the agonizing choices made by each these of six young people and mourn the fact that their protest comes at such devastating personal cost. This is vastly increased by the callousness of the government.

We remain appalled at the proscription of Palestine Action under anti-terrorism legislation. This proscription has had profound repercussions for the exercise of freedom of speech, as we have seen in the arrest of nearly two thousand citizens for expressing their support for the group.

However we further draw attention to the proscription's toxic effect in dehumanizing these young hunger strikers, its use in justifying a callous disregard for their rights and their physical and psychological wellbeing. None of the Palestine Action prisoners, now held under terrorist conditions, has actually been charged with terrorism but instead with a variety of criminal offences.

A pernicious example of this punitive attitude was the speed with which the government appealed the decision of the court to release Kamran Ahmed on bail because of his particular family circumstances. While the appeal was upheld, thus keeping Kamran Ahmed in prison, it was the government's own choice to bring it, a move we can only see as vindictive.

<https://www.cage.ngo/articles/court-of-appeal-denies-bail-to-filton-18-activist-overturning-previous-senior-judge-ruling>

Terror labels seep into every aspect of responses to and treatment of those so designated, whether directly or indirectly. In the case of these incarcerated young people it has included restrictions on contact with their friends, families and supporters. Furthermore it has led to their silencing, because those accused under terror laws are not considered by those in power to have coherent political motives but are assigned to the category of the irrational and the dangerous.

These discourses have clearly influenced the mainstream media which has provided virtually no coverage of what the hunger strikers are actually protesting about.

Their actions in breaking into military facilities, spray-painting buildings or smashing computers are undertaken with the specific purpose of making it much more difficult -ideally impossible- for an Israel arms manufacturer such as Elbit to pursue its deadly trade in the UK. They also bring to public attention the UK's role in aiding and abetting genocide. Like all of us in the solidarity movement, they have been faced with the government's ruthless determination to maintain its relationship with Israel regardless of the cost to the rights of UK citizens. They are paying a much heavier price than most of us, compounded by attempts at dehumanizing, silencing and isolating them. We must not allow this to succeed.

We salute the hunger strikers for their resolve, and for their personal sacrifice. Their action in putting their own bodies on the line has brought forth responses in solidarity from colleagues in Gaza, who know only too well the effects on them of starvation as a tool of genocide.

We urge the Government to accept the hunger strikers' demands. We consider them to be political prisoners, punished for exposing the UK government's active complicity in the genocide in Gaza. Acceding to their lawyers' call for a meeting to discuss their demands will ensure that all efforts can be focused on protecting the lives of these young people and their future health. It might go some way towards rectifying the grossly inappropriate, unjust and reactionary steps taken by the UK Government. If they continue to refuse to consider the demands of the hunger strikers, if they claim to be following protocol when they are flouting even their own rules on remand prisoners,¹ their actions will go down as one of the most shameful episodes in the history of British justice. By contrast the stand taken by these young activists will go down in British history alongside that of other heroes of the struggle for justice, peace, dignity and freedom.

UK-Palestine Mental Health Network
Child Psychotherapists for Palestine
EMDR therapists for Palestine
Family Therapists for Palestine
Group Analysts for Palestine
(Kimberley Pearson on behalf of) Mental Health Workers UK 4 Palestine
Nurses4Palestine

¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/dec/26/un-experts-raise-grave-concern-over-treatment-of-palestine-action-hunger-strikers>

Psych Aware
Psychiatrists for Palestine
Psychoanalytic Voices for Palestine
Psychologists for Social Change
Social Workers for a Free Palestine
The Anti-Oppressive Psychology Community.
The Red Clinic