



Home Office

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP  
Minister of State for Crime,  
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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
House of Commons  
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22 May 2023

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 12 May to the Home Secretary on behalf of a number of your constituents about the right to protest. I am replying as the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire and I will address the point for which the Home Office has responsibility.

As your constituents will appreciate, peaceful protest is a vital part of a democratic society. It is a long-standing tradition in this country that people are free to demonstrate their views, provided that they do so within the law. The Government is fully supportive of the right to protest but this right does not extend to criminal behaviour.

The Public Order Act 2023 received Royal Assent on 2 May 2023. The Act introduces a variety of measures including new offences of locking on and causing serious disruption by tunnelling alongside the introduction of Serious Disruption Prevention Orders which target protesters who are determined to repeatedly inflict disruption on the public. The measures in the Public Order Act 2023 will improve the police's ability to manage such protests and take a proactive approach to prevent such disruption happening in the first place. This in turn will ensure that police can better balance the rights of protesters against the rights of others to go about their daily business and to focus their resources on keeping the public safe.

The Government respects the role of the UN and acknowledges the importance of their work. It is the Government's view that the Public Order Act 2023 is compatible with both the European Convention on Human Rights and international human rights obligations.

We continue to support the right to protest and expect the courts and police to act compatibly with our human rights obligations. However, the freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and association are not absolute and do not extend to wreaking havoc on the lives of others.

Yours sincerely,

**Rt Hon Chris Philp MP**