

# campaign



Photo: Denise Laura Baker

## Defend our right to protest

**Kevin Blowe**, Campaigns Coordinator for the Network for Police Monitoring, explains the grim reality of the new Public Order Act, which seeks to curb our right to protest.

**THERE IS NO EASY WAY** to say this: the new Public Order Act 2023 is very bad indeed.

The Act contains all the most oppressive, most draconian changes the Conservative government previously failed to push through Parliament in 2021. Many fear it amounts to a ban on protest.

For decades the Home Secretary has had

the rarely used power to declare demonstrations unlawful. Instead, what the government is now seeking – quite deliberately – is to make protesting more risky.

Few people are fortunate enough not to feel worried about the impact of an arbitrary arrest, a prolonged court case, or sustained police surveillance on themselves

Campaign for Nuclear  
Disarmament,  
162 Holloway Rd,  
London N7 8DQ  
020 7700 2393  
enquiries@cnduk.org  
www.cnduk.org



and their family.

Turning disruptive protests – what we might call effective protests – into an activity only a few are prepared to risk is intended to stop what the government really fears: a mass movement of direct action and civil disobedience.

That's why new legislation sets out to stop so-called 'disruptive' protests in three ways:

- By redefining serious disruption to mean anything more than a 'minor' inconvenience.
- By creating new offences, including 'locking on'
- By giving the police new powers to stop and search demonstrators and to target key organisers

In many ways the new offences themselves are not the most alarming part of the Act. The police already had numerous choices available when arresting protesters and they used them vigorously all the time.

However, the latest offences are much more serious and the government says tougher new police powers are therefore necessary to counter a new scary threat to society – 'serious disruption'.

These include the power to stop and search anyone who might be planning to act

disruptively and to confiscate items that might cause disruption.

For a few key organisers, the police will soon be able to seek Serious Disruption Prevention Orders – essentially individual banning orders – to stop them taking part in protests.

Underpinning all of this is a massive increase in intrusive police surveillance on political movements.

If this sounds particularly bleak, it's because frightening people away from taking action on the many crises we face is exactly what the government wants. Instead, as campaigners and as movements, we can resist the spread of uncertainty in four ways.

We can build confidence and skills to challenge the misuse of police powers on the streets and offer better protection for the members of our movements most likely to face police surveillance. We can avoid seeing ourselves in isolation from other campaigners and understand the threat of oppressive policing falls on all of us.

And finally, Netpol needs your help to actively monitor what is happening around the country. You can find more information on how from our Defending Dissent campaign at [netpol.org/defend-dissent](http://netpol.org/defend-dissent).

## Spotlight

### This month Mid Somerset CND and Peace Group



The national CND team has just returned from Glastonbury music festival. Also in attendance were numerous CND groups who support the event, while raising funds for the campaign, by running property lockups. As the CND group local to the event, Mid Somerset CND and Peace Group had their own stall on the Green Futures field and spoke to festival-goers about the need for a world without nuclear weapons.

As well as Glastonbury festival, Mid Somerset CND arranges many fantastic actions throughout the year.

■ If you live locally, why not get in touch with the group? Phone 01749 870078 or email [info@midsomcnd-peacegroup.org.uk](mailto:info@midsomcnd-peacegroup.org.uk) to make contact.

# NPT hits the buffers

CND Chair **Tom Unterrainer** will be attending an international conference to discuss the progress – or lack thereof – on global disarmament this summer. Here he explains more about what to expect.

**S**TATES that are signed up to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) will convene in Vienna from 31 July – 11 August for the 2023 Preparatory Committee (PrepCom). PrepComs are regular meetings that try and get some movement on Treaty matters, in advance of the subsequent NPT Review Conference – the next is to be held in 2026. The last three Review Conferences (2005, 2015 and 2020) failed to reach agreement on what the United Nations describes as “substantive outcome documents”. In plain language, this means that the Treaty described by the British government as “essential” to maintaining peace and security has – over the last two decades – made no progress whatsoever.

When the NPT came into force in 1970, the Swedish diplomat and politician Alva Myrdal – who went on to win the 1982 Nobel Peace Prize – wrote that it was a “grossly discriminatory treaty” where

“[o]bligations were laid on the non-nuclear weapon countries, and only them,” and where only a “promise ... to negotiate in good faith the cessation of the nuclear arms race” was extracted from the nuclear-armed states.

Such a “discriminatory” state of affairs has persisted. For example, when Boris Johnson announced a 40% increase in Britain’s nuclear arsenal this amounted to a clear breach of the NPT. What mechanisms were in place within the NPT process to hold the British government to account, and demand that he retract the announcement and engage in good faith negotiations towards disarmament instead? None – and this failure over the decades has not escaped the attention of the 185 non-nuclear states that are party to the treaty. The NPT has no mechanism for holding the nuclear weapons states to their treaty obligations, and this is a key reason for the development of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

This is a completely unacceptable and unsustainable situation. The bonfire of treaties that began with George Bush’s termination of the ABM Treaty in 2002 and continued during the Trump presidency, with his sabotage of the INF Treaty and JCPOA (‘Iran Deal’), means that the NPT is one of the last treaties standing that includes nuclear-armed states. Continuing doubts over the future of New START and heightened nuclear tensions mean that the upcoming and subsequent PrepComs should be an opportunity for focused and determined efforts to reduce tensions, enforce non-proliferation and engage in serious efforts to meet the basic obligations of nuclear-armed states under the NPT.

CND will be in Vienna, where we will work with our friends in the international peace movement to raise our ongoing concerns and to exert whatever influence we can on the nuclear-armed states to meet their obligations.

**Labour CND annual conference 8 July,**

11am-3pm, online.  
■ To register contact [labourcnd@gmail.com](mailto:labourcnd@gmail.com)

**Communicating effectively with your supporters: CND workshop 18 July,**

7pm-8pm, online.  
■ To register contact [information@cnduk.org](mailto:information@cnduk.org)

**Stop the Arms Fair Days of Action 4-15 September**

ExCel centre, London's Royal Docks, E16  
■ Contact [resistDSEI@protonmail.com](mailto:resistDSEI@protonmail.com)

**Christian CND Peace Pilgrimage 2023**

**15-18 September**  
Starting in Barrow-in-Furness  
■ Contact [christians@cnduk.org](mailto:christians@cnduk.org)

**Yorkshire CND benefit gig 15 September**

The Trades Club, Holme Street, Hebden Bridge HX7 8EE  
■ Contact [info@yorkshirecnd.org.uk](mailto:info@yorkshirecnd.org.uk)

**CND AGM**

**7 October,** 10:30am-1:30pm, online  
■ Contact [officemanager@cnduk.org](mailto:officemanager@cnduk.org)

**CND Policy Conference**

**28 October,** online and in-person at Methodist Central Hall, Manchester, M1 1JQ  
■ Contact [officemanager@cnduk.org](mailto:officemanager@cnduk.org)



## Remember Hiroshima and Nagasaki

CND groups and supporters across the country will be commemorating those who died in the nuclear attacks on the Japanese cities on 6th and 9th August.

**If you are organising an event,** please let us know: [information@cnduk.org](mailto:information@cnduk.org), so we can promote.

## Meet the staff

This month:  
**Sara Medi Jones,**  
**Campaigns Director**

“As a member of the campaigns team for CND, my work involves getting our anti-nuclear message heard in as many ways as possible – which means no two days are the same! One day I’ll be organising a demonstration, the next I’ll be writing a report.

My role is to coordinate CND’s day to day campaigning as well as looking ahead and planning our next actions. I support CND groups with their various events and edit this magazine. One of my favourite aspects of the role is working with other organisations, including our international partners. We can learn so much from similar struggles across the world.

Another highlight is arranging CND’s presence at the Glastonbury music festival. We’ve just returned from this year’s festival where we raised the topic of the cost of nuclear weapons and signed up hundreds of new supporters, all from a field in Somerset. As I said – every day is different!”

