

POLICING, PROTEST AND CONFLICT:

A Report into the Policing of the London Gaza Demonstrations in 2008 – 2009

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INTRODUCTION

The morning of Saturday 27 December 2008 saw the commencement of 'Operation Cast Lead', an enterprise that ultimately materialised into an extensive Israeli military offensive on the Gaza strip. During the ensuing 22-day torrent of land and air assaults (the former instigated on 3 January 2009), Gaza became victim to over 6400 casualties. Apart from an excess of 5000 wounded, Israeli forces were responsible for the fatalities of over 1400 persons. Only 237 amongst the dead were combatants, the remaining 1172 being non-combatants. Amid the non-combatants, 111 women and 355 children lost their lives.¹ Furthermore, civilian casualties were exacerbated by the inclusive destruction of civilian infrastructure. The accompanying devastation was indiscriminate and encompassed United Nations' compounds, schools, hospitals, homes, mosques and police stations.²

Israel's war on Gaza has been described by Avi Shlaim (professor of International Relations at Oxford university) as, '... senseless... an eye for an eyelash... a war between Israel and the Palestinian people...'³ This 'senseless' war triggered a reaction, a global reaction of significant proportions, so as to command the conscience and mobilise the multitude.⁴ The resultant protests took place, not only in the UK, but also across the globe. People of all persuasions (in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australasia and the Americas) came together in an act of solidarity for the plight of the Palestinian people.⁵ In Israel itself, 10,000 people (from all over the country) assembled in Tel Aviv to voice opposition to their political masters' war.⁶

In London, starting on 29 December until the end of the 22 day assault, various protests took place everyday opposite Palace Gardens on Kensington High Street / Kensington Road, ranging in size from a nightly protest of between 50 – 200 demonstrators, a 24/7 vigil of 2 – 20 protestors and mass demonstrations ranging from 2,000 to tens of thousands.

The Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) believes it is imperative, even at this stage, and in anticipation of what is to follow in this report, to emphasise the importance for the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to, '...*educate* themselves about the cultural norms of crowds and the legitimate intentions for participants that flow from these'.⁷ IHRC acknowledges and welcomes the Chief Inspector of the Constabulary (HMCIC), Denis O' Connor's submission, 'Adapting to Protest'.⁸ This report is representative of an attempt to revive a style of policing '...based on minimal force and anchored in public consent...'.⁹ For this reason alone, it constitutes a significant step forward and should be commended. However, while the report engages with various anxieties in manifest abundance during the London Gaza protests, disappointingly, it falls short of satisfactorily addressing the question of corralling or 'kettling'.

This common policing tactic continues to challenge the right to liberty and security enshrined in International and European instruments, and will be addressed in further detail when appropriate.

It is IHRC's intention that this report follows in the same tradition of its previous work, 'Muslim Profiling: Questions Regarding Police Strategy and Policy with Regard to the Pro-Israel rally and Counter-demonstration on 6th May 2002'.¹⁰ However, it will soon become apparent that the scope of this report is broader, as a direct reflection of the wider subject matter in hand. As we have seen above, the Gaza military offensive triggered a substantial global outcry, yet the primary purpose of this report is to hone into the events that surrounded the London Gaza demonstrations. This report will investigate and highlight concerns over MPS' approach to policing the London Gaza demonstrations. IHRC will duly test this ubiquitous approach against international and domestic standards, civil society and activist expectations, and the standards set by the police forces themselves. Through the accounts of participants,

and in the presence of a selection of photographs, we will endeavour to highlight the *main* incidents of police heavy-handedness, alleged brutality, bias, harassment and arbitrariness.

TERMINOLOGY

For the purpose of this report, we will use the following definitions:

- a) Supporters of the Palestinian cause be they Palestinian, non-Muslim or Muslim will be referred to as pro-Palestinian.
- b) Supporters of Israel regardless of persuasion will be referred to as pro-Israeli.
- c) The terms 'protest' and 'demonstration' will be used interchangeably.
- d) The terms 'law enforcement officials', 'police' and 'MPS' will also be used interchangeably.

POLICING PROTESTS: THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

IHRC appreciates the fact that the quandary surrounding the policing of protests is not new, neither is it one unique to MPS. In truth, there have been plenty of instances, not only domestically but globally, where the inadequate policing of protests has been prevalent. For example, within a similar timeframe to the Gaza demonstrations, Greece was hit by demonstrations and riots, which were aggravated by the fatal shooting of 15-year-old Alexis Gregoropoulos by a law enforcement official.¹¹ Furthermore, there has been a history of protests as a consequence of the anti-globalisation movement, most notably, the Genoa Group of Eight Summit protest in July 2001. During this protest, hundreds of peaceful demonstrators, police officers and rioters were injured, and a young Genoese anarchist, Carlo Giuliani, was killed.¹² Closer to home, the G-20 London Summit protests in April 2009 (subsequent to the Gaza demonstrations), saw police liberally employ tactics of corralling or ‘kettling’. This, along with the related death of Ian Tomlinson and the use of force and mistreatment of Nicola Fisher, rightfully prompted the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to solicit HMCIC to reconsider policing tactics at public events.¹³

In recognition of the above, it is crucial to lay claim to the UK’s obligations under the international human rights framework. Having ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Britain is obligated to guarantee the covenant’s provisions in domestic law. The most important of these, for the purposes of this report, are the right to liberty of movement,¹⁴ the right to freedom of expression,¹⁵ the right of peaceful assembly,¹⁶ the right to liberty and security of person,¹⁷ and the right to presumption of innocence.¹⁸ As this report unfolds, it will become apparent that a number of these rights were infringed during the UK Gaza demonstrations. Additionally, a key persuasive document set up by a United Nations General Assembly resolution should have serious import into MPS strategy and policy.¹⁹ The UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials reflects the standards the international community have devised for law enforcement officials (UN Code of Conduct). For this reason, it should bind the conscience of policy makers, and its importance has been recognised in the Association of Chief Police Officer’s (ACPO) ‘Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms’ (ACPO Manual).²⁰ Furthermore, the Secretary of State’s ‘Code of Practice on Police use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons’ (Code of Practice), draws attention to the fact that police use of force should operate within the bounds of international law, European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), common law and statutory law.²¹ However, we shall duly see that in the context of the London Gaza demonstrations, there were instances where such observance was lacking. Moreover, the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials²² (UN Basic Principles) constitutes another important persuasive document of which we have accounts confirming that such *basic* precepts regarding the use of force were ignored.

Finally, consistent with the theme of the global context on policing, IHRC received the following account from an individual attending a Gaza demonstration on 11 January 2009 in Los Angeles, USA:

“Upon arriving...we were instructed by LAPD that we were to go to Veteran and Wilshire for parking. We parking [*sic*] and tried to make our way through the Israeli protest there. As we made our way through the crowd several hundred surrounded us, and began calling us terrorists and threatening to kill us. Several grabbed my Palestinian headscarf and threw it on the floor and began spitting on it. They grabbed my sign and broke it in half. Then the[y] proceeded to grab my arm, pull my hair, and grab my neck. Several of them punched my [*sic*] in my arm and

in the back of my head (I have bruises and cuts and pictures from after the attack). I was with 2 other people, my younger brother (18) and my Cousins [*sic*] (17). My younger brother was punched in the back of the head, a lady spit in his face, and his shirt ripped clean off of his back. As our cousin led us out of the circle, the police who were standing just stood there unmoved. When we asked them for protection they said, “good luck” when we asked for directions to the Palestinian side, they said “run.” When we finally arrived at the Palestinian side, the LAPD there was informed. They said, “go back and point them out and then we will arrest them,” he proceeded to roll up his window and was unresponsive. They also refused to escort us to our cars, forcing us to wait for the Israeli protest to end before leaving.”

This account is an illustration of bad practice in the policing of public events. The nonchalant attitude displayed by members of the LAPD undermined the individuals’ right to security of the person and facilitation, hence, demonstrating that the policing dilemma is not exclusive to the MPS. At this moment, in order to fully comprehend the prevalent strategy of policing protests in the UK, it is essential to consider the theoretical justifications for the actions observed.

POLICING PROTESTS: THE THEORETICAL APPROACH

‘Police are the first line of defence for human rights.’²³ This important normative inference implies that law enforcement officials ‘...shall at all times fulfil the duty imposed on them by law, by serving the community and by protecting all persons...’ (UN Code of Conduct, Article 1). Furthermore, ‘...law enforcement officials shall respect and protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons’ (UN Code of Conduct, Article 2).

The language of international and domestic human rights takes effect through the premise of the social contract, and the expectations of civil society are based upon this proposition. The influential writings of Locke and Rousseau centred around humanity’s ‘state of nature’. Locke’s conception of the ‘state of nature’ is one of a golden age. The sole deficiency in this near idyllic state was the insecurity of property. The antidote to this problem lay in the social contract, whereby man would renounce part of his liberty to a sovereign in return for the protection of his natural rights.²⁴ For Locke, the social contract only gave the state the right to *enforce* these natural rights and *not* the rights themselves [*emphasis added*]. He saw power and jurisdiction as *reciprocal*, ‘...there being nothing more evident, than the Creatures of the same species and rank promiscuously born to the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be *equal one amongst another* without Subordination or Subjection...’ [*emphasis added*].²⁵ Rousseau’s conception of the ‘state of nature’ is similar to Locke’s; however, Rousseau saw the social contract as a utopian objective. The ideal is that the people should govern themselves. However, ‘one can hardly imagine that all the people would sit permanently in an assembly to deal with public affairs...’²⁶ Hence, the need for government by those dedicated to the task as their area of expertise.

The above accentuates the fact that civil society’s expectations imply the notion of the social contract. It would naturally follow from this idea that the police service should operate for the benefit of the *public interest*. In truth, ‘inspecting policing in the public interest’ is the stated aim of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (HMIC).²⁷ Additionally, ACPO has incorporated the Nolan principles of public life into their code of ethics. The first of these principles stresses that, ‘holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest’. However, it has come to IHRC’s attention and concern that the existing theoretical foundation employed for public order training is one wholly irreconcilable with civil society’s expectations.

The present basis used for public order training is one that has been termed as ‘classic’ crowd psychology.²⁸ Dr Clifford Stott’s submission to the HMIC holds that, ‘this theoretical position is outdated, unsustainable scientifically and it is critical that training is updated to reflect contemporary theory and evidence’.²⁹ Furthermore, ‘classic’ theory imagines ‘...that crowds are irrational, dangerous and open to easy exploitation by agitators and therefore implies that physical crowds are single psychological entities posing inherent dangers to public order’.³⁰ Such a theory, it is asserted, is prejudiced and fails to explain crowd behaviour and the surfacing of collective conflict.³¹

To fully grasp the immediate, it is necessary to briefly consider exactly how this ‘classic’ theory emerged, and how it is opposed to the ideals of civil society and the social contract. The disintegration of the French military subsequent to the Franco-Prussian war (1871) and the affirmation of the socialist ‘Paris Commune’ stirred Taine into producing a “pseudo-scientific” account of the psychology of crowd behaviour’.³² More

importantly, it is agreed that Taine was a political conservative whose aim was to bring the prevalent Enlightenment social theories of the day, particularly *Rousseau's social contract*, into disrepute [*emphasis added*].³³ Hence, the foundations were laid for a **pathological understanding** of crowd psychology. The real key figure in this line of crowd psychology, however, was Le Bon.³⁴ He brought the ideas of suggestion, diminished responsibility and mental contagion to fruition. Hypnotic suggestion was thought to reduce an individual's consciousness, rendering him/her more 'primitive' (thus, accounting for crowds' alleged irrationality). Criminology's diminished responsibility was a consequence of an individual's submergence in the crowd (hence, the individual becomes less intelligent and less responsible). Finally, the proposal of mental contagion, (as extrapolated from epidemiology) supposedly accounted for the spread of ideas in crowds.³⁵ Importantly, the appeal of Le Bon's work did not lie in legitimate empiricism, but rather, '...because Le Bon took the findings of the closed societies of science and disseminated them to a public and political elite eager to understand and control the crowd at a time of increasing threat of socialist revolution'.³⁶

It is of concern to IHRC that this line of 'classic' crowd psychology, initiated by Taine and popularised by Le Bon, has been institutionalised in public order training. Dr Clifford Stott's submission has uncovered the influence of Le Bon as implicit in discourse related to public order policing. He illustrates this by pointing out that the material for the 2006 NCPE Public Order Commanders course states that, 'a crowd is a device for indulging ourselves in a kind of temporary insanity by all going crazy together'. He further states that the 2008 NPIA material on learning outcomes urges trainees to appreciate how, 'based on the work of *Le Bon*, a group of people may be termed either "crowd" or "mob" [*emphasis added*].³⁷

IHRC recommends that senior police officials urgently update public order policing training to reflect modern scientific discourse. The Elaborated Social Identity Model of crowd behaviour (ESIM) is now the principal authority on crowd psychology.³⁸ In light of its successful employment by the Portuguese Public Security Police at the 2004 UEFA Football European Championships,³⁹ ESIM provides the ingredients for the police service to develop a 'graded' tactical profile. Moreover, Dr Stott's collated research emphasises that this model supports a scheme that would promote facilitation, differentiation (for example, on use of force), self-policing, 'dynamic risk assessment', communication and dialogue (before, during and after an event).⁴⁰ Such a scheme would not only create perceptions of police legitimacy within crowds, but would also meet civil society's expectations of the social contract. In fact, shades of such an approach were incorporated into the NPIA 'Practice Advice on Critical Incident Management' (with attention drawn to, for example, situation awareness and the restoration of public confidence). However; it is a concern that the normative import of such a document was not made operational.⁴¹

It will duly become apparent, in the context of the London Gaza demonstrations, that 'classic' theory on crowd psychology manifested itself. Through the numerous accounts and images produced by participants, it will become clear that the police created conditions, which could only serve to provoke collective conflict. Amongst other tactics, undifferentiated use of force, intimidation (for example, full riot gear, dog squads, 'kettling'), discrimination and arbitrary handling of the laws only serve to delegitimise perceptions of police in the eyes of crowd participants.

AN ANALYSIS OF POLICING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LONDON GAZA DEMONSTRATIONS

Freedom of assembly is a political freedom, a civil liberty and a human right. It is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),⁴² the ICCPR⁴³ and the ECHR.⁴⁴ The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) has stated that, ‘the British public has the inalienable right to protest peacefully...’⁴⁵ Freedom of assembly is the individual right to come together and collectively express, promote, pursue and defend common interests.⁴⁶ In light of events on 27 December 2008, the common interest of Londoners to guarantee the right to life and the horror which accompanied the bombardment of non-combatants, motivated the multitude to protest (primarily) outside the Israeli embassy at High Street Kensington. Such was the nature of the ensuing demonstrations, which lasted the duration of ‘Operation Cast Lead’, that it was not practicable to give any advance notice under Section 11 of the Public Order Act 1986 (POA). What follows is a detailed analysis of policing during the Gaza demonstrations with the aid of eyewitness accounts and photographic evidence.

i) 28 December 2008

Observer, OM notes:

“Barriers were set up preventing demonstrators from crossing the road and protesting outside the gates of the Israeli Embassy. As the barriers were set up half a metre away from the curb, most protestors were on the pavement, in front of a shop called “Food Hall.” This blocked the pavement.

“The protestors although unhappy at being forced into such a tight alley way and away from the embassy sight, were very peaceful. The barriers were only pushed down by the protestors once they witnessed the arrest of one man (he was standing in front of the Embassy gates across the street) took off his shoe and threw it towards the gates. A few police officers were standing by the gate. About 6 officers jumped on him. Once protestors saw this they pushed against the barriers leading them to fall. The crowd then walked over towards the embassy gates. The police were limited in number and were clearly not ready for this development. The road was blocked and a few cars, including a Taxi were stuck in the middle of it all.

“The protest went rather well until 3:45 when all of the police aggression and confusion began. The police attempting to bring the protest to an end, as opposed to letting people disperse naturally and slowly, formed a chain 2 or 3 lines deep and began to push the protestors away from Kensington Crescent and down Kensington High Street towards the direction of the Royal Garden Hotel.⁴⁷ Many individuals including myself, attempted to leave the demonstration by walking to Kensington High Street Station. The police however had closed of[f] the road by forming a chain and were not allowing anyone past the “Food Hall” shop. Rather than informing us that the protest was over and that they wanted us to leave in the direction of the Royal Garden Hotel *they decided they were going to physically push us down the road [emphasis added]*.

Much confusion arose as a consequence, as people could not understand why they were being pushed. *No announcement saying the protest was over was announced by either the organisers or the police. Thus women, children and elderly protestors were being pushed by the police [emphasis added].* The crowd, not knowing where to go or what was being asked of them, began to panic and a lot of pushing occurred. Many of us tried articulating to the police that the protestors did not know what was going on, but there *[sic]* response was “*we don’t care. Just move.*”*[emphasis added]* Of course, there was nowhere to move as I had a police line in front of me pushing me and people behind me. Many protestors tried to talk to the police but the police were not listening to our concerns. I heard many different police officers respond with a variety of worrying phrases such as “we don’t care just move,” and “move the fuck back.”

“This occurred for about 5 minutes before things took a more sinister turn. A few Police officers began to indiscriminately kick and violently push with their arms. *I even saw a police officer throw punches into the crowd [emphasis added].* He was about 5.6 feet, stocky and had a clean shaven head. Naturally, a few individuals began to push back. The police began to grab individuals randomly from the crowd and attempt to arrest them. Naturally the crowd grabbed these individuals back and I saw them save two people from being arrested.

“At this point a friend of mine grabbed my arm and we managed to get out of the crowd. We got to the back of the crowd and could no longer see what was occurring at the front line with the police. What we did not see was police officers from the back telling people to walk towards the Hotel. This would have made it easier for the crowd to know what was happening and would have prevented the pushing.”

As is evident from the above, the onset of demonstrations brought with it traits of ‘classic’ theory. Police had relied ‘...too heavily upon containment and dispersal through the indiscriminate use...of force...’⁴⁸ The indiscriminate use of force proceeded despite the demonstrators being, ‘...made [up] of people of all ages, from babies to very old and frail men and women, including two people in wheel chairs’.⁴⁹ Furthermore, it became apparent that the MPS underestimated the impact that Israel’s military offensive had had on civil society. The following account exemplifies the inadequate space provided for participants on 28 December 2009:

“I attended the demonstration of 28 at 2pm when it was scheduled to start. I have been to many demonstrations outside the Israeli Embassy (or more precisely on Kensington Road) for various causes. Even before arriving *I knew this would be a much larger event than normal* and I wondered what space we would be given seeing as there would be at least a few hundred people attending *[emphasis added]*.

“As it happens I arrived at 2pm and did a head count of about 200 people. I stood at the back. As I made a phone call to a friend to see where he was (which took about 2-3 minutes) I would say another 100 people arrived. People were arriving in huge numbers.

“However we *had been given the same small space that a vigil of 15 or 20 people usually gets [emphasis added]*.

“Very quickly there were too many people, all being pushed into a small space. Not too long into the demonstration, the crowd for some reason I wasn’t sure of at the time, walked through the barriers and crossed the road, thus taking up the space of the road as well as both sides of

the pavement. By that time, I would say that there were between 2,000 to 3,000 people there, including many families with young children.

“At no point was the crowd violent or aggressive. Some speeches were made, which ended abruptly and before the scheduled end time of the demonstration, and an order was issued by police officers standing by the Palace Gardens gate for the crowd to move back. However it appeared that police on the other sides of the demonstration were blocking the crowd from dispersing. As a result people in the midst of the crowd began getting squashed, and I feared there would be a crush. Luckily, someone at the front who I recognised as a veteran activist (not one of the organisers) shouted out to people not to move back but stand their ground. I think this possibly averted a very dangerous situation.

“Eventually I was able to make my way to the edge of the crowd, where a line of police stood blocking protestors exit towards Kensington High Street Station. When anyone tried to cross, they became quite aggressive. They linked their arms and pushed into the crowd. At one point a man with a child on his shoulders asked to go through and was abruptly pushed away. Another protestor intervened to say to the police officer who had done that that there was no need to speak or act that way. He was slapped back and then pushed by the officer. He then retaliated by pushing back and a minor fracas ensued, which was broken up by other concerned protestors.

“The line of police however continued to block anyone leaving and indeed anyone from joining. The police were essentially asking people to disperse before the demonstration was scheduled to end, and people were still arriving. The line of police on the side I was standing became increasingly aggressive, for no apparent reason. Whilst most demonstrators were quite frustrated that they couldn't leave (myself included – I had left my kids with my mum, and was expected back within a certain timeframe), they were not aggressive towards the police. The police's behaviour included pushing into the crowd as if to move them on, though the crowd was so large, there appeared nowhere for us to go.

“At one point, a protestor climbed part way up a lamppost and held a banner on a pole. The police shouted at him to come down. Which he eventually started to do, at which point an officer started pulling him by his leg and shouting. I cannot see how pulling him was of any use, if anything it could have caused the protestor to fall and injure himself and maybe others in the vicinity.”

Apart from the other concerns raised by this account (which will duly be dealt with), the inadequate space provided for demonstrators was not an isolated occurrence. In truth, by failing to inform themselves of the cultural norms of crowds and their legitimate intentions, the MPS failed to adopt a dynamic strategy. As a result, inadequate space provided the recurring theme for the duration of the London Gaza demonstrations.⁵⁰

IHRC is concerned by the lack of communication and dialogue with crowd participants, and by the indiscriminate use of force. Tactics of intimidation, antagonistic to the peaceful facilitation of the protest, also concern IHRC. Eyewitness accounts and photographic evidence confirm the employment of the ‘...much loved dog unit...’⁵¹

Crowd participant Anon states:

“The problem began with the street barricades,...until then it had been a peaceful demo. The police *arrived with police dogs and that is when it started to get out of hand and the atmosphere became tense [emphasis added]*. They were using the dogs and extra force to move the crowd along, using abusive language and pushing people very hard.

“I saw one protester high up on the lamp pole, before saying anything to the protester, *the police used the dogs trying to intimidate him into coming down [emphasis added]*. The protester was clearly heard saying that he will come down willingly, but the police were shouting profanities (F*** off!) and pulling at his legs.

“Police began pushing into the crowd, pushing us away from the embassy in a very aggressive manner, *punching and randomly grabbing people by the hair [emphasis added]*. I had a flag in my hand, which they tried to pull off me but I held on to it. They grabbed me, *thumbed me in the eye and ripped out a lot of hair* (I noticed later at the station, my clumps of hair on my shoulder) *[emphasis added]*. On my part, *I put up no resistance whatsoever*, and only held on to my flag, *the force used was disproportionate [emphasis added]*. They locked my arms behind my back and put me face down on the ground whilst I was shouting ‘*I’m not resisting!*’ They sprained my wrist and thumbs in the process *[emphasis added]*. They then handcuffed me very tightly, with lacerations being noted by my doctor later, and I was taken to Charing Cross police station and imprisoned. I was released in the early hours of the next morning and had acquired a sprained wrist, a sore head [from officers pulling at his hair] and a tender eye [from officers poking him directly in the eye].”

The use of the dog unit for purposes of intimidation is of concern to IHRC, as it can only serve to create conditions that may lead to collective conflict. Furthermore, in this case, the use of force did not meet the test of proportionality and falls foul of international standards, as the extent of force used on Anon (and others) was not strictly necessary in the performance of duty (UN Code of Conduct, Article 3).⁵² Additionally, ‘law enforcement officials in carrying out their duty, shall, as far as possible, apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force...’ (UN Basic Principles, principle 4). The ACPO manual clarifies this matter further with its appellation to a ‘...reasonable, proportional and effective response’.⁵³ This latter observation is particularly important in consideration of Anon’s constant reiteration of the fact that he was not resisting arrest. Another eyewitness states that he was, ‘horified [*sic*] by the police response towards peaceful demonstrators. [They were] totally unjustified and unprovoked attacks against all including many women and children’. Eyewitness MFC has stated that, ‘...the police were VERY heavy handed, I felt the *use of dogs and police on horses, as well as riot police* seemed very extreme and only served to increase tension between protestors and police...the police *shoved a young boy* about hard in the head and he was crying. I also saw a *woman and her son* who’d been struck hard by the police and were crying’ *[emphasis added]*. Finally, one eyewitness states, ‘...at about 16:20, I overheard one of the policemen advising a young man who found he could not get to the other side of the cordon, and just wanted to get there, being a tourist on shopping tour “just go back and scam, I tell you, do it now. There *will be some action* in [a] few minutes and you don’t want to be here” *[emphasis added]*. So, it became clear to me that the violence will be manufactured pretty soon’.⁵⁴ IHRC finds it regrettable that the MPS failed to create perceptions of legitimacy; on account of their heavy-handedness and failings in communication and dialogue.

It is evident that on this first day of protests, the police had treated the crowd as a single physical entity without regard to its composition. The indiscriminate force on display bore undertones of ‘classic’ theory. The following account from Tank will illustrate the dangers of assuming that crowds are innately irrational or dangerous:

“I haven’t been to a protest for well over a decade and so I felt kind of shy and didn’t really know what to expect. Also, I’m not good in crowds and have an enormously large personal space and so I wasn’t sure what kind of internal battles I would have to perform in order to stay long enough to say what I wanted to say to Israel – *that they daily strip themselves of their humanity by denying the Palestinians theirs.*”

“However, I soon discovered that *a large group of people who have come together for an act of love towards humanity are different from other large groups of people [emphasis added]*. You smile and you crack jokes with strangers, you hold on to unknown people and you help each other sit and stand in small spaces. We overheard a Sky news reporter calling us ‘an angry bunch’ and for the first time that day we felt that emotion, since we couldn’t recognise ourselves in the picture she was painting of the day. Perhaps anger against what Israel is doing is what motivated us all [to] come to the demo; but we came together in defiance and in our belief in the humanity of the Palestinians, and that was expressed by feelings of unity, of solidarity, and of happiness that we were all taking a stand and that we all cared. *We felt no anger that day, but rather love and compassion, for we knew we were doing the just and the righteous thing [emphasis added]*.”

“The BBC says we clashed with police after storming a barrier – that is an outright lie. The truth is that we were exercising our right to peacefully protest when the police decided they’d had enough of us and started pushing against us. They formed a human wall and pushed as hard as they could so we were forced back, away from the other protestors, away from the embassy. They pushed even though many of us were peacefully sitting down (think a Ghandi-esque sit-in), they pushed even though there were *small children and people in wheelchairs [emphasis added]*. They pushed against us so that we struggled to stay upright and unhurt, tripping over each other as we stood up or moved backwards. They pushed against us, and they brought the one piece of ugly to the whole afternoon.”

The above clearly illustrates that on 28 December 2008, law enforcement officials used tactics of intimidation and indiscriminate, disproportionate force. Law enforcement officials failed to communicate effectively with demonstrators and were abortive in facilitation. The concomitant heavy handedness and use of abusive language only served to weaken perceptions of police legitimacy and create conditions which could potentially lead to collective conflict.

ii) 29 December 2008

A Crowd Participant recalls:

“After the police brutality last night, we were expecting more of the same tonight. Interestingly, it did not quite happen – orders from above, after the politicians must have seen the shocking footage from last night...and they were right not to: many more people have come, with hundreds of young children and babies. ...But it was even more interesting than that. On this evening, the police chose not to block all traffic, like they did yesterday, but to block only on one side on the road, allowing the traffic to separate the demo from Palace Green. ...They have incarcerated some 2500 people into a tiny area surrounded by metal barriers, and one could hardly move at all, creating much consternation and additional anger.

“...treated by the police as so much cattle, and anger rising from all, some taunts by the police manning the barriers led to an amazing feat – the whole file of the demonstrators at the front started dragging and pushing the barriers towards Palace Green and embassy road gate, pushing the policemen into that enclave. All hell broke loose, and for some long moments it felt that the events of last night may be repeated, with a vengeance. It seems that someone high up at the Met was more responsible tonight – after the police have retreated to the safe area behind the iron gates of Palace Green...the demonstrators were now in control of the road, and traffic came to a halt. ...The police have abandoned the road to the protestors, a rare sight, bearing witness to the strength of emotions of the protestors, and police recognition of it. The demonstration was full of hundreds of parents with young children, none of them less angry than the rest of us; the police had decided to avoid conflict for the time being, but hundreds more of the riot squad arrived and placed themselves at the periphery, ready to pounce of [*sic*] the demonstrators. ...Only by 19:00 has the demo started to disperse, at which point the police moved in like a large commando group, pouncing on youngsters which they have marked for arrest...they have managed to arrest eight demonstrators [*sic*] for what they called ‘public order offences’, as usual” [*emphasis added*].⁵⁵

Observer OM notes:

“There was a heavy police presence in comparison to the previous day’s demonstration. Using barriers, a designated area was created for the protestors.

“...the crowd at the *centre* of the demonstration began to push against the police barrier in their attempt to cross the road and get to the gates of the Israeli embassy [*emphasis added*]. The police tried to prevent this and pushed back on the opposite side of the barrier. They soon lost control as the force of the crowd over powered them. The police started removing the barriers to prevent possible injuries.

“...It was all very peaceful until about 6:15. As much of the crowd began to disperse, a group of about 100 youth began to throw objects and flairs[*sic*]. The crowd threw an ignited traffic cone at the police and I saw them burn one officer’s hat.

“By this stage most protestors had left. The 100 strong crowd that remained, made up mostly of teenage youth, walked down Kensington High Street and stopped buses and cars. They turned on police vehicles and became confrontational with police officers...”

It is clear from the above, that MPS tactics were heavily reliant on a controversial form of containment. Far from the ideas of innate crowd irrationality and dangerousness, we have learned that protestors from the centre of the demonstration started to push against police barriers. As a consequence of corralling or ‘kettling’ demonstrators, the MPS created conditions which could potentially result in collective conflict. It is only reasonable to assume that the concentration of numerous individuals into an unyielding space (with very limited freedom of movement), would result in elements ‘boiling over’ at the densest component of the entirety, namely the centre. One eyewitness described the ensuing crush, pursuant to protestors breaking free of their ‘sheep pen’, as feeling, ‘...like being in a very dense wood where the trees are all waving placards. It was near impossible to move in any direction for a long time...’.⁵⁶

One observer described the resultant state of affairs:

“[The] crowd became more rowdy as time went on...missiles were thrown at the police; two police caps were snatched and set alight; smoke bombs thrown at [the] police (although where we were standing everyone was whispering the police had thrown the smoke bombs).”

As is plainly evident, this regrettable scenario was brought upon by the tactics employed. The practice of ‘kettling’ has a direct effect on perceptions of police legitimacy. Moreover, by causing elements to ‘boil over’ (provoking collective conflict), MPS created conditions which could have plausibly made ordinarily peaceful elements more susceptible to the calls of agitators.

The practice of ‘kettling’, although not deemed illegal by the House of Lords (HL) (pending judgement at the European Court of Human Rights at the time of writing in December 2009)⁵⁷, is one that continues to be controversial. The indefinite detention of peaceful demonstrators (and even non-participants) in tightly enclosed spaces continues to challenge the right to liberty enshrined in the ECHR and ICCPR (Articles 5 and 9 respectively). Despite this, HL held that, ‘measures of crowd control will fall outside the ambit of Article 5 so long as they are not arbitrary, i.e. they must be resorted to in good faith, they must be proportionate, and they must not be enforced for longer than is reasonably necessary...’⁵⁸

In view of this, it has become apparent (in the context of the G20 summit protests) that senior Metropolitan police commanders did not understand their legal duties when ‘kettling’ thousands of protesters near the Bank of England.⁵⁹ In light of the accounts above, in relation to MPS corralling tactics, serious questions arise concerning ‘proportionality’, ‘necessity’ and ‘good faith’.

The above clearly illustrates that on 29 December 2008, law enforcement officials relied too heavily on tactics of containment, generating conditions that could easily escalate into collective conflict. While there were elements of good practice from MPS officials (for example, removing barriers to prevent possible injuries and waiting for the crowd to disperse before dealing with agitators), the venture was reactionary (in relation to the previous day’s heavy handedness) and flawed by the arbitrary tactics employed.

iii) 3 January 2009

IHRC is most concerned by events that unfolded on 3 January 2009. In what has become known as ‘the underpass incident’, law enforcement officials employed tactics that allegedly amount to police brutality. IHRC received many reports for ‘...what appears to be a coordinated attack in a tunnel away from public view’ and ‘...an orchestrated attack of indiscriminate police brutality...’⁶⁰

Reports confirm that the demonstration on 3 January 2009 was a large demonstration, which drew in tens of thousands of protestors. It is believed that the protests were peaceful as thousands marched from Embankment through to Trafalgar Square, ‘...pausing to throw a number of shoes symbolically [*sic*] at Westminster...[*sic*]’.⁶¹ Protestors then assembled for a rally, where public figures made speeches.

In the region of 3:30-4pm, protestors began to march towards the Israeli embassy. In proximity to the underpass, at the end of Regent Street leading onto Kensington, law enforcement officials halted the protestors’ advancement. Accounts confirm that up until this point the demonstrators had been peaceful. Law enforcement officials then informed the crowd that they might advance if they composed themselves as, ‘...the police barricades [*sic*] and aggression worked to escalate the tension’.⁶² Accordingly, the protestors complied and, ‘...the police began slowly inching backwards to allow the demonstrators to move forward’.⁶³ Once protestors were firmly positioned in the underpass, ‘...with no photographers or media present...’ the police abruptly brought proceedings to a standstill,

“...and then charged with batons [*sic*] and shields at protestors who comprised youths, students, women, elderly and children. In the ensuing crush and indiscriminate violence [*sic*] by the police, many were trampled [*sic*] and severely [*sic*] hurt. One protestor receiving [*sic*] a substantial gash to the head with blood pouring [*sic*] out.⁶⁴ There were scores of other protesters further injured, as police regrouped and charged twice more battering [*sic*] people without restraint, including young women who [were] desperate to avoid involvement [and] stood to the side yet [they] were still battered and pushed and *people seeking medical treatment denied any route out of the tunnel*.” [*emphasis added*]⁶⁵

Crowd Participant UY states:

“After listening to the speeches in Trafalgar square, there was a call for everyone to march to the Israeli embassy (unplanned) so everyone started making their [*sic*] way to the embassy. We made our way slowly, then near the Hyde Park underpass, the police stood in front and cut us off from the rest of the demonstration. It was like a ‘domino effect’ – people were stopped from going to [the] embassy. The crowd were becoming restless as the riot police remained there pushing people back. One officer stepped forward and asked for calm and claimed that they would be taking us [through] a new route for our own protection as it was getting too crowded overhead. The officer in charge put his hand up and promised he would get us to the embassy safely. Thinking this a reasonable compromise, a crowd followed the officers into the underpass, with many others shouting at us not to trust the police. I followed the crowd into the underpass, with my young girls youth group, [and] my 12 year old son. I noticed that the group that was stopped by the police included women, children, old people and disabled, as well as many ‘bearded brothers’. I was in the second row directly in front of the police. Half way into the tunnel, the police stopped and turned around facing the demonstrators. This sudden stop caused people to barge into each other...behind the police a riot gear emerged. The riot police came in front and there were some scuffles with those in [the] front row...a 20 year old man was grabbed by the riot police and taken into a nearby van – he came out with scratches around his eyes and claimed they had pulled his hair and poked him in the eyes.

“Riot police charged into the crowd twice. [The] First time people were caught unawares and ran back, hurting themselves and running over people who had fallen. Even non-Muslims said they were feeling really threatened by the police. A thin layer of gas was visible over the crowd, and people were complaining of dizziness and some were also physically sick [When IHRC contacted UY two days later, she said that she had found it hard to get out of bed and was still feeling sick as her head was hurting]. The crowd regrouped and went on towards the police, but this time more cautiously, although they were still chanting. My twelve year old son who was in the front row, was hit on the head by a baton...since then he has been too scared to go to any of the demos [UY believes that the main aim was to intimidate and scare people]. My son wanted to get out but was trapped by police on the other side of the underpass, with one officer stating, ‘stay there...you went in there with them, you stay in there with them’...this led to many jumping over the railings into Hyde Park to escape...terrified. My son called me and kept on asking her where I was, everyone seemed disorientated because of the gas and the dizziness. Those who continued were beaten up...I saw one man [we can identify as Joe] who was beaten on the head right in front of me and had to be taken away...presumably to hospital. Everyone was traumatised by this and was shocked that [the] police were so conniving and calculating in that they ensured that there were no press or camera crews down there to record.”

Crowd Participant Joe states:

“I myself was hit on the head by riot police in the underpass despite not acting violently in any way. When I eventually [*sic*] got out of the tunnel [*sic*] (*the police refused me permission to leave immediately due to the blood gushing from my head [emphasis added]*). I went to hospital and now have 5 stitches in my head.”

Crowd Participant X (aged 17) states:

“On the 3rd of January 2009, after the heart-warming and triumphant gathering of tens of thousands who support the cause of the Palestinian people in Trafalgar square, London, most protestors then made their way to the Israeli Embassy to make their voices heard as they had done for the last 6 days. Protestors of all races and creeds, men [*sic*], women and children chanted and held banners and signs condemning the Israeli government for their [*sic*] inhumane bombardment of Gaza. I was there.

“We walked singing choruses in English and Arabic waving our Palestinian flags and holding up our signs. Peacefully. When we arrived at Green Park, we were stopped. There was no reason for us to be stopped. I was at the front and asked one of the police officers why we had been halted, to which he replied that we would be permitted to proceed eventually. While we waited, the sheer number of police officers arriving was frightening. All of them were in riot gear and *most had balaclavas underneath their helmets [emphasis added]*. There must have been 500-1000 officers in sight while we were waiting to be let through.

“After approximately 20 minutes of uncertainty, we were informed that we could go through the Hyde Park underpass. With haste, and eagerness, we climbed over gates (most walked around) to get to the tunnel. We were split into two groups once in the underpass and the noise was deafening. The chants and choruses became louder and people were greeting each-other. The police who had formed five lines in front of us, two lines directly in front of us in black riot gear and three lines in riot gear and high-visibility coats behind them, made us stop on numerous occasion[s] for minutes each time. Whenever this happened, we would chant and boo. Nothing else.

“When we were in sight of the light at the end of the tunnel, we were once again stopped. This time for many minutes, which the crowd responded with demands of why, but still, no violence or pushing. One of the officers then shouted a command. The first two rows of riot police then attacked anyone in sight of them with their riot batons, often surrounding individuals and beating them to the ground [ground]. The crowd tried to run backwards in fear but as the rows behind were oblivious to what was going on, people fell on each other and many people were crushed by the bodies of their fellow protestors falling on them. The police continued to brutally, mercilessly and ruthlessly attack people with such viciousness that many people around me *were leaking blood from their head [emphasis added]*. I saw several people unconscious and many people were clutching parts of their body in pain, likely to be a fracture from the sheer force of the attacks by the Metropolitan Police. *I stress that there were women, children and babies in prams in this crowd [emphasis added]*. Furthermore, everyone was innocent and part of a very peaceful protest. There are many things that cannot be explained using the English language and the sheer violence I saw from the POLICE and the fear I felt cannot be expressed in language. It was horrific, I was sure that I would be hit on the head by officers and fall

unconscious. If that would have happened, it would not have been the end of it as officers often *continued to beat people who were on the ground* with their batons of [sic] kicking them [emphasis added].

“When the unprovoked attack was finally over, the injured were helped on to their feet and in anger many people threw bits of wood at the ranks of evil police in front of them. I was furious. *I was possessed by a rage, which I have rarely felt in my life as I saw a woman, who looked over 60 years old, being helped up by other victims* [emphasis added]. The aftermath of the attack left debris of shoes, scarves, signs, blood and bags in between the wide no-mans-land which separated us, the innocent protestors and the riot police, who had attacked us viciously in an unprovoked attack.

“After maybe 10 minutes of panic and fear of another charge, the police started to walk backwards, meaning that we could continue walking forwards and into the open air. We proceeded with caution, this time I was in the first few rows, instead of being right at the front. We walked for maybe to [sic] minutes when we stopped yet again and without warning the police in front of us repeated the horrors of which took place but fifteen minutes before. The same unexplainable attack on innocent people occurred [sic]. The police force was as merciless and ruthless with their attacks as before. Hitting any life form in sight with their riot batons, this time, there was no crushing and piles of innocent people lying on top of each other as the crowd were [sic] cautious after the first attack. This attack was just as vicious and lasted just as long as the attack minutes prior to this one. As with this attack, *men, women and children were beaten senseless* and the police were indiscriminate with whom they hit as all were innocents... [emphasis added].”

Crowd Participant Claire states:

“It was a brilliant display of solidarity with the Palestinians, but the provocative behaviour of riot police in panic mode escalated an otherwise peaceful demonstration. We are ordinary citizens, who were marching for peace, but who were terrified by series of batoned [sic] charges in the Hyde Park Underpass. Conveniently, *it meant the police violence went unseen and unrecorded by the TV camera crews...* [emphasis added].

“The march was lively and good natured, a diverse mix of Muslims, Jews, young, old, women, men, children and families...”

“...As we approached the end of Piccadilly, with thousands of marchers streamed behind us, the familiar uniforms of the Met Police had changed to the blue helmets and thick plastic shields of the riot police.

“We were held at the top of the underpass for several minutes and the crowd was growing restless as it was getting darker. We saw a photographer or protester being pushed from the railing to the ground by one of the riot police, an ill tempered exchange followed and some pushing and shoving, and an experienced marcher tried to calm the situation down, which succeeded...”

“The atmosphere was still lively, friendly and peaceful despite the minor incident and the amassing of more riot police...”

”Eventually we were allowed to continue, down the slope to the underpass. We were held back a couple of times...the atmosphere was great. We moved nearer to the front, perhaps ten back, amongst us were children and women and older people, predominantly Muslim. We didn’t see any missiles or aggression from the protesters.

”The next thing we knew was that *a hail of batons came over the top and our bodies were being pushed backwards and people were screaming...the police were charging us [emphasis added]*. We threw ourselves to the sides and put our hands over our heads. The charge had stopped, and we checked around us to see whether people were ok. Some young Muslim women next to us were crying and clearly petrified.

”And then it came again, charging towards us, then stopped. My heart was thumping, I thought there was no way we could go forward or back, I was terrified of being hit or crushed or trampled on. Everyone tried to sit down so we could show the police we were non-aggressive, but that didn’t work. It was total panic.

”The police must have charged again, because we were then on the other side of their line, so we grabbed the hands of the women we were next to to make a run out the front of a tunnel. *A protester was lying still, face down on the ground in front of us [emphasis added]*. We tried to leave but someone said we were safer where we were.

”Eventually we managed to retreat backwards and we realised they had stopped the march behind us so that there was only about 100 of us down there. We were then released so we progressed out of the underpass towards Kensington, by now cut off from the main march and ringed as a group by riot police.

”There were injuries, but mostly we were shocked, *we had done nothing wrong, illegal or provocative [emphasis added]*. We came to the conclusion [that] we had been taken down the underpass deliberately because the police panicked. They wanted to frighten us, but *it just turned an otherwise peaceful protest into a hostile and volatile situation...*”⁶⁶ *[emphasis added]*

The above is merely a sample of the numerous reports that IHRC received in relation to the underpass incident (supplementary accounts can be found in Appendix A). IHRC is disturbed by accounts that describe law enforcement officials, in full riot gear, using indiscriminate force on peaceful protestors in a tightly enclosed space comprising ‘...children and women and older people, predominantly Muslim’. IHRC is concerned that the above events display undertones of ‘classic’ theory, in relation to the mass of pro-Palestinian protestors. More specifically, IHRC is concerned that the MPS still, ‘...perceive Muslims in a way that presents them as both potentially and inherently dangerous minorities’.⁶⁷

Law enforcement officials appear to have created conditions that seriously damage perceptions of police legitimacy. One protestor said, ‘I would normally sympathise with the police in that they have a difficult job to do. However after last Saturday [3 January 2009] there [*sic*] unprovoked brutal attack on peaceful demonstrators, they deserve everything they get’. Many of the witnesses feel that the MPS had prompted unprovoked and manufactured violence on peaceful protestors. Crowd participant X described how he, ‘... was possessed by a rage, which [he had] rarely felt in my life as [he] saw a woman, who looked over 60 years old, being helped up by other victims’. The alleged arbitrary, disproportionate and undifferentiated (yet premeditated) use of force on display, only serves to delegitimise police authority. Consequently, crowd participants then develop a shared sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’. As Dr Clifford Stott details:

“Where police used relatively indiscriminate tactics of coercive force (e.g. baton charges) they would tend to do so against those in the crowd who saw themselves or others around them, as posing very little, if any, threat to public order. As a consequence there would be corresponding increases in the number of people in the crowd who perceived the police as an illegitimate force. Such interactive social psychological processes occurring during the crowd event would then lead directly to a change in the nature of the crowd’s social identity (their shared sense of categorisation of ‘us’ and ‘them’) along two critically important dimensions defined by the ESIM in terms of the crowd dynamics of legitimacy and power.”⁶⁸

In light of the above events, it is once again clear that police tactics continue to provide the ingredients for collective conflict. In truth, one witness stated that as the protestors reached the embassy with anger, ‘...clearly reverberating around the crowd’; word spread about events in the underpass, and the crowd were ‘very upset’ and thus, she could ‘...understand why things got out of hand at the embassy’.⁶⁹

In ‘Adapting to Protest’, Denis O’Connor (HMCIC) claims that, ‘some officers have come to interpret notions of ‘proportionality’ of their response to aggression and force as ‘reciprocity’...’.⁷⁰ In relation to the peaceful nature of protestors, the accounts above seem to illustrate that even the inferior standard of ‘reciprocity’ had not been met. This would mean that questions of ‘proportionality’ wholly evade contention. The official police line claimed that violence in the underpass broke out with some demonstrators trying to drag officers into the crowd. Additionally, Scotland Yard claimed that law enforcement officials made one ‘10-metre advance’ into the mass, using ‘recognised and proportionate tactics’; moreover, a spokesperson added that, ‘there were no police lines behind the group of protesters and at all times demonstrators could leave via the underpass back into Piccadilly’.⁷¹ Even by the logic of the immediate enunciation, serious questions regarding ‘proportionality’ surface. Furthermore, IHRC have received numerous reports, which claim that the police advance exceeded the ‘one’ so claimed. In regard to the underpass incident, IHRC would like to draw attention to a series of correspondence requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

On January 8 2009, James Kinnear requested copies (from the MPS) of recorded information in relation to the physical altercation between the police and anti-war protesters that took place in the Hyde Park underpass. He received a reply the same date informing him of a response within the statutory timescale of 20 working days. Consequentially, on 20 January 2009, Mr Kinnear was informed in a letter that acted as both notice for applying section 12 FOIA (section 17(5)) and a section 12 refusal outright (section 12 being the refusal to comply with a request for information based on the cost of compliance exceeding the appropriate limit). On 24 January 2009, Mr Kinnear requested an internal review of MPS handling of his FOIA request, outlining his concerns that the MPS had not followed the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) best practice.

On 28 January 2009, MPS responded to Mr Kinnear acknowledging his complaint and endeavouring to respond by 20 March 2009. On 18 March 2009, a letter from the MPS advised Mr Kinnear that MPS were unable to meet the original response time and that they endeavoured to complete the review by 3 April 2009. In a series of correspondence, the MPS moved this date to 24 April 2009, then to 11 May 2009, then to 2 June 2009, and then to 19 June 2009. Finally, on 18 June 2009, Mr Kinnear received a letter from the MPS confirming that they held the information pertinent to his initial request; however, they had decided not to release this information. The letter acted as a section 17 refusal which had overturned the application of section 12 and now relied on FOIA sections 30(1)(a)(b)(c), 30(2)(a)(iii), 31(1)(a)(b)(c) and 40(2) for denying access to the relevant information.⁷²

The ACPO code of ethics incorporates the Nolan principle of ‘openness’ which states, ‘holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take..’. Hence, IHRC calls for transparency and accountability with regard to the underpass incident.

The above accounts appear to illustrate that on 3 January 2009, law enforcement officials used arbitrary and indiscriminate force on peaceful demonstrators in the Hyde Park underpass. Law enforcement officials acted in contravention to various articles of the UN Code of Conduct. The articles breached were:

Article 2, for failing to respect and protect human dignity and maintain and uphold the human rights of all persons; Article 3, for the unnecessary use of force; Article 5, for instigating cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and Article 7, for failing to take immediate action to secure medical attention when required (also required by Chapter 4, 8.10, ACPO Manual).

Law enforcement officials also allegedly acted contrary to the UN Basic Principles, particularly principles 4 and 13. Furthermore, IHRC is deeply concerned by reports of a ‘mysterious gas’ causing sickness to crowd participants and of reports of riot police wearing balaclavas underneath their helmets.⁷³ Protestors are not aware of the reasons why riot police wear balaclavas and they rationally assume that the practice is designed to hide the identity of individual officers. This lack of communication and dialogue will surely excite protestors into engaging the instinct of self-preservation. IHRC calls on the MPS for transparency and urges full investigation into events that took place in the Hyde Park underpass.

iv) 7 January 2009

On 7 January 2009, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, Jewish leadership council and UK Zionist Federation drew 300-400 pro-Israelis to a counter demonstration outside the Israeli embassy. Reportedly, there were at least 10 arrests, however, ‘...the arrests were ultimately sparked by police tactics at the end of the evening rather than the conduct of the opposing sides during the protest’.⁷⁴ Police had made a strategic decision to end the pro-Palestinian demonstration, yet, pro-Palestinians were determined not to disperse at least until the pro-Israeli contingent dispersed. In response, police ‘...arbitrarily plucked [two young men] from the departing crowd and arrested [them]. One was restrained on the ground by up to six policemen, despite not resisting arrest and having been complying with their demands to leave. Protesters seeking to help the men were slammed up against shop windows and threatened with batons...[the police]...suddenly began baton charges down the middle of the road. The move led to chaos as protesters, including women and children, attempted to dodge the batons’.⁷⁵

Crowd Participant Debbie states:

“Today, [Wed 7th Jan], there was a bit of trouble at the counter-protest outside the Embassy (to the Nuremburg (pro-Israel) rally). At one point, I decided to get away. The police were walking behind me and for no reason, 2 or 3 of them started shoving me. It clearly didn’t bother them that I could have fallen over and been trampled on...one of them later assaulted me.

“I had left my banner behind and so decided to hang around a bit to see if I could find it. For my own safety, I sat at the bus stop with another lady. Then, some policemen walked by, one of whom recognised me. He said, ‘You were at the demonstration!’ (as if demonstrators aren’t allowed to sit at bus stops), yanked me out of my seat and started to push me! I don’t know what

he was trying to do to me but he had no right to do that – and he was a big chap. Thankfully, a group of Muslims saw this and bundled over [to] me to protect me from him. 2 other officers pulled him away...thankfully, someone took his number (3407)...I intend to press charges for common assault...”

Crowd Participant W states:

“Protest outside the assembly was quite peaceful. The police then commenced to surround the pro-Palestine rally and charged through the middle, *running into the crowd with punching fists*, hitting anybody who were [*sic*] unfortunate to be in their path including women [*emphasis added*]. Many were falling onto the ground and hurting themselves in the process. The[y] then divided the pro-Palestinian rally into two. The police were very violent, shouting obscenities, pushing and shoving the protestors. In the end, protestors were being pushed between the officers, with one officer pushing us to one side, not realising that there was another line of officers pushing us from the other side.”

Crowd Participant S states:

“At the relevant time, police wanted to disperse the counter demonstrators. However, we refused to leave at least until the pro-Israelis were dispersed in like fashion. Suddenly, in response, the police used force, using their batons to beat the crowd. Members of the crowd were mainly women and children with a minority of men. In an act of civil disobedience, we sat down unmoved. The police started kicking us. *I was manhandled by 4 or 5 police officers who threw me onto the pavement [emphasis added]*. I was kicked repeatedly by officers on my lower body and legs. I got up and sat with the protestors a number of times and suffered verbal and physical attacks as a result. On the 3rd occasion I said ‘arrest me, I won’t move’. By the 4th occasion I was left alone and others were dispersed. I suffered bruises and other visible marks. I saw other protestors who were beaten, mistreated and injured. One man was bleeding as a result.”

The above accounts illustrate the complete lack of facilitation offered to pro-Palestinian protestors. Worryingly, police seem to have used intimidatory tactics and undifferentiated, indiscriminate force on a crowd that were, ‘...mainly women and children with a minority of men’. Once again, undertones of ‘classic’ theory resurfaced. However, reports seem to indicate a strong element of bias against the pro-Palestinian quarter. Such bias was explicit especially where there was a prominent pro-Israeli presence (on 7 January and 11 January 2009). IHRC observers monitored extensive filming and photographing of pro-Palestinian supporters, and noted that the pro-Israeli protestors were not filmed in any manner, and had a minimal police presence in their quarter. The partiality displayed for the pro-Israeli protestors was clearly depicted by the Evening Standard, which showed the wide gulf in policing tactics for the respective sides.⁷⁶ The photographic evidence categorically shows a heavy presence of police manning the pro-Palestinian contingent, significantly (and provocatively) facing them. In contrast, police presence in front of the Israeli contingent was slight and police officers stood around casually facing away from Israeli supporters.⁷⁷ IHRC is anxious by the latent prospect that the MPS view pro-Palestinian supporters as inherently irrational and dangerous. Likewise they deemed the pro-Israel supporters to be the ones solely in need of protection. This resonates with experiences recounted in the IHRC report ‘Muslim Profiling’ when two lines of police faced a pro-Palestinian counter-demonstration, with their backs towards a pro-Israel rally. As a result a rally participant was able to walk through the lines to the pro-Palestinian counter-rally and assault an elderly Rabbi speaking in support of the Palestinian cause. IHRC calls for equality to be the seminal factor when dealing with minority and majority communities. IHRC calls on the MPS to abide by the ‘MPS Policing Pledge’ which states that, ‘our primary

commitment is to always treat people fairly, with dignity and respect, making sure that everyone has access to our services’.⁷⁸

The above clearly illustrates that on 7 January 2009, law enforcement officials used tactics of intimidation and undifferentiated force on pro-Palestinian protestors. MPS tactics were incendiary, biased, and so easily ripe to the possibility of collective conflict.

(v) 10 January 2009

On 10 January 2009, demonstrations expressing solidarity with the people of Gaza took place across the UK. In London, 50-100,000 people participated in a procession, which assembled at Hyde Park and then moved on towards the Israeli embassy. Reports and photographic evidence depict some disconcerting scenes throughout the course of the day:

At 15:10, in close proximity to Holland Street, ‘...5 riot vans spotted with another 6 rental vans around the corner. Police are putting on their riot helmets. *The crowd is good natured*’ [*emphasis added*].

At 15:30, ‘People throwing shoes and burning placards...close to the Israeli embassy. Cops tried to intervene but had missiles thrown at them by *part* of the crowd. Riot police turn up later and start *beating people who had nothing to do with the earlier shoe throwing*, about 7 people were injured including a photographer’ [*emphasis added*].

At 15:45, Kensington High Street, ‘the police have put barriers between protestors on the road and the pavement which *has caused a crush* [*emphasis added*]. The crowd were shouting “shame on you!” at the police who are now wearing riot gear. A man has climbed a lamp post to avoid the crush...also a smoke bomb was ignited. There are many riot police situated on the side streets of Kensington High Street’.

At 15:55, ‘the Israeli embassy...is lined with riot police in full riot gear and shields...’.⁷⁹

At 16:10, ‘Hyde park is surrounded by riot police. There are a large number of police horses and riot vans in the park. This presence has made it difficult to traverse the park causing problems for people attempting to find their coaches’.

At 16:45, ‘Starbucks on Kensington High Street has had it’s windows smashed using a police barrier...Starbucks is owned by Howard Schultz who is a staunch Zionist and supporter of the occupation of Palestine. The police attempted to charge the crowd and managed to partially force their way through to the shop resulting in many injuries. Two unconscious police officers were witnessed being stretchered out of the crowds’.

At 16:52, ‘The police have completely closed off Hyde Park’.

At 16:55, ‘Riot police...charged the crowd, forcing them over metal barriers where they were enclosed. People had no where to go and there were many injuries. Two protestors have been spotted being stretchered off in neck braces with what looks like head injuries’.

At 16:57, 'Eye-witness saw a Muslim woman with head injuries being stretchered off, and children as young as 10 years old being crushed against barricades after a panic was caused by a charge from the riot police'.

At 17:40, 'about between 1000 and 2000 people reported kettled outside of the Israeli embassy...'

At 18:50, 'up to 2000 people still reported kettled outside of the Israeli Embassy, a long wait is expected...'

At 19:10, 'the police are releasing protestors from the kettle one at a time, taking their names, addresses, and photographs through a tunnel of cops. The police have announced that all 1000-2000 protestors in the kettle are suspected of criminal damage. This practice is of dubious legality and protestors are discussing whether to refuse providing personal information'.

At 19:15, 'some protestors are suffering from the effects of minus temperatures, so it was decided to provide personal information to the police. Protestors are being escorted away from the kettle by riot police in different directions...one protestor has said it "reminds her of an Israeli checkpoint" ...' .⁸⁰

Crowd participant Carzim states:

"I was disgusted to see the unprovoked attacks that the police subjected on the majority of the demonstrators, although there were certain individuals who obviously cared nothing for Palestine and where [*sic*] there for trouble, *the police made no effort to separate the peaceful democratic demonstrators from the hooligans* [*emphasis added*].

"Firstly the police being equipped in full scale riot gear was intimidating enough, around the world protestors with the same amount of peaceful protestors where [*sic*] met by normal uniformed police officers who where [*sic*] very sympathetic and kind towards the crowds[.] [W]hat was displayed by these police officers was brutal, unjust and cold making sarcastic remarks such as are you guys cold, just go home your [*sic*] not going to liberate Palestine with your protests!!

"The 2nd grave concern I had was [with] the fact that the aggressive police officers stood out and they where [*sic*] the ones flaming up the crowds into anger [.] ...[F]unnily enough *they did not wear any shoulder numbers* as if to say we will do what we want and get away with it [.] despite me telling them a number of times to put them on display as well as telling a sergeant [*emphasis added*] ...On all occasions I was met by a smug smile and they simply shrugged it off with no care.

"3rd point to make was the actual level of force used on us [.] [W]hilst standing in that crowd all I remember was me standing protesting peacefully...all I hear is a shout get back[;] being confused and turning around to see who this command was aimed at, I was met by a huge blow by one of the police shields that sent me flying back [.] [I]f that was not enough they charged forward and all I can see was the level 2 public order batons raining down on us whilst a lot of us had tripped over each other in panic.

"*I took a look at my sweater only to find it covered in blood* [;] I panicked thinking I had been

injured but looking to the side *I saw another fellow demonstrator with blood gushing from his head [emphasis added].* [A]gain the police continued there *[sic]* blows despite him pleading to them “what have I done, I am just a peaceful protestor, blood is all over me yet you continue to beat me”, they took no notice and another blow was given by there *[sic]* shields, *he was given no medical attention and rather just left to bleed [emphasis added].*

“I do appreciate the violent individuals in the demonstrations who clashed with police where *[sic]* in the wrong...but how could you explain or even justify the other sections...that where *[sic]* totally peaceful and purposely separated themselves from the middle where the violence was taken *[sic]* place...being randomly bashed and beaten with riot batons[.][D]o they think our woman and children or our men are not made out of flesh, we are humans too and we are proud to be British so what was our crime? I tried so much to reason with the police telling them you can obviously see this side of the demonstration is peaceful and we are complying with your every command...but no change, nothing!

“I will not generalise every police officer present as being a part of the unjust and unlawful force used on us in that demonstration [,] as I remember individual police officers where *[sic]* saddened by what had happened and the display put on by there *[sic]* colleagues and openly discussed there *[sic]* feelings with me[.] [T]his gave me this little feeling of warmth and there was still some hope, not every person is ignorant [;] some do understand and support our cause, some do shed a tear for every innocent civilian blood that is dropped by the onslaught of the might of the Israeli army.”

Crowd participant Samia (aged 17) states:

“I was standing right next to the barriers on the opposite side of the Israeli embassy. The crowd was closed in and the police had pushed people in, making it difficult to move. My cousin [M] (22) and I were being pushed against the barriers, and when I made to jump over them, the police stopped me. I kept on telling them I was getting squashed and I needed to get out, but they wouldn't listen. At one point, some people around us pushed hard against the barriers and I was able to get out. My cousin had got her leg trapped in between two barriers and couldn't move. I tried to help her get her leg free, but *one of the policemen hit me on the back of my neck with a baton* and I had to run away *[emphasis added]*. They were all wearing visors so I was unable to identify them. Eventually my cousin got out, but she was unable to walk and I had to carry her around the corner. *I called for an ambulance three times, but was told they were not making calls within the 'riot' area [emphasis added]*. An ambulance finally managed to make it, and we went to the hospital, where my cousin was told she had torn her ligament.”

Crowd participant Atrat states:

“I joined the mass demonstration and remained outside the embassy. Scuffles broke out with the riot police pushing and trapping a couple of hundred protestors within the vicinity. (this happened after Starbucks had its windows smashed with a barrier). They kept protestors cordoned off for approximately 2-3 hours in freezing temperatures, taking ten or so people out at a time to be searched, photographed and questioned. I was taken and my details were noted as well as my photograph. *I was then searched 'intimately' by two male officers...*although I repeatedly asked for a female officer *[emphasis added]*. In the distance I saw a Muslim sister being pinned down by a male officer but searched by female officer. I repeatedly told them that

I could empty my pockets out for them, but they told me that it was not necessary and continued to search me. At one point I asked if I could call my friend (white male), who I had come with to tell him to wait for me and why I was being delayed. The officers said I was not allowed to make that phone call. I was asked where I was from, and when I replied 'I am British', the officer replied, 'Yes madam, we know you are British, but ethnically where are you from?' to which I answered I was Pakistani. I was then *told that I would be charged for 'breach of peace'*, although I had not been involved in anything other than protesting [*emphasis added*]. I was then warned to stay away from future demonstrations to which I replied 'I will not stay away it is my right'. After they released me, I met up with my friend and asked if he had been searched and to my surprise, he informed me that they had only asked his name and date of birth and then asked if it had been a 'happy day'."

Crowd participant Sally states:

"Thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands met in Hyde Park in the bitterly cold morning of Jan 10th. Cold and good humoured, spirits were high and so was the strength of feeling about the ongoing massacre of the people of Gaza.

"...the crowd was a very diverse lot including young and old and people of all races [.]

"...at around 3pm there were 2 loud bangs from behind the gate. There was some panic and confusion in the crowd as most were unsure [about] what was happening. The crowd was pushed back by police and there was smoke coming from behind the embassy gates. People were confused as to whether it was tear gas or not. Chants of 'Shame on You' rang out from the front...the police pushed the crowd back again causing more panic...the crowd was pushed back several more times and there were several more loud bangs...*the whole crowd was engulfed in smoke that stung the throat* – definitely some form of police crowd dispersal [*emphasis added*]. Booming rang out from those trying to escape the gas in panic.

...We turned the corner on to Kensington High Street at around quarter to 4. The crowd was very slow moving, tightly packed, friendly and waiting patiently to move towards the embassy...at around quarter to 5 more officers with cameras appeared on the balcony to the left of the embassy gates. Shortly after, mass panic broke out as police pushed the crowd, causing those already densely packed to be crushed. *People all over were crying out in pain and desperation* [*emphasis added*]. It became very difficult to breath. Some became hysterical with panic. There was no way out. The crowd around me started to shout 'Back Off' in desperation. I soon realised that if I carried on shouting I would have passed out. There was no air. Riot police stood behind the barrier on the pavement doing nothing. Suddenly the barriers at the edge of the road gave way. People tripped and fell. It became apparent that people were trapped under the barriers. The Guardian reported that masked youths pushed over protest barriers whilst mentioning nothing of this highly dangerous police tactic in which ma[n]y were injured. The crowd became very distressed, confused and angry-unsurprisingly.

"The police...[split]...the demonstration into 3. We, as part of a group of several hundred were pushed aggressively down narrow Kensington Court...*We could hear the thud of others being beaten back with shields and truncheons* as we too were treated to the same [*emphasis added*]. I could hear the sound of thuds and cracks as people were forcibl[y] shoved backwards on to shop windows. There was a group of teenage girls huddled in the corner very frightened and

trapped...*Many had seen injuries; people crushed including a report of an elderly man. There was no police medical assistance where we were and people were calling out for help from any medics in the crowd, whilst the line of riot police stood and watched [emphasis added].*

“...We...rejoined the march at the end...Riot police were pushing the crowd back here too. Not long after we arrived the crowd panicked and ran as the police ran forward with batons [*sic*] raised.

“The crowd were understandably panicked and angry...the mood was one of confusion and it seemed to me that *a lot of people were staying out of concern for others in the crowd- whether they knew them or not [emphasis added].*

“At 5.30 [,] 3 riot vans arrived at the rear of the crowd...Not long afterwards [,] *the vans drove at speed towards the makeshift barricades [emphasis added].* The crowd panicked and many ran round the corner but people did not disperse in large numbers.

“...As we stood just down the side road, a group of teenage girls struggled their way out of the crowd, carrying an injured friend. They were obviously distressed, angry at police actions and resolute.

...At around quarter past 7 [,] we received a call from a friend who was *still being detained in a massive group* that could have numbered into the thousands, outside the front of the embassy [*emphasis added*]. Police had let women and children leave but were holding all the men, only letting them out one by one after they each gave their details.

“...The strength of people’s anger is understandable in light of the continuing massacre in Gaza and intensified by the violent and dangerous actions of the police.”⁸¹

Crowd Participant Y states:

“Suddenly the police rushed to the crowd pushing and hitting anything in front of them[.] [W]hile I was on my way out [,] I saw a woman [*sic*] on the floor shouting and crying [;] her leg was broken at [*sic*] the police [,] but they didn’t take any notice...so I gave them my back and helped the woman [*sic*] up passing her onto possibly one of her friends [,] [At that point] ...I felt something strike my head from the back so I turned around only to receive the edge of there [*sic*] round shield in between my eyes knocking me back *followed by a burst full of blood [emphasis added]* I somehow got away with the help of some of the crowd [,] I then went asking officer after officer to direct me to the medic [,] some said to f*** off [,] some told me to go home and call an ambulance [*emphasis added*]. I was then given a bottle of water to wash my face but it was still bleeding so I tried again and asked another officer which [*sic*] was outside of the crowd and mumbled something [,] [S]o out of my frustration I shouted at him and demanded that I see a doctor [,] He then in a way jumped at me frightening [frightening] me forcing me to run [,] [A]s I ran I may have shoved him...nothing offensive but was shortly caught and charged with assault on a police officer and given a court date [,] [I] don’t feel safe I don’t feel fairly treated.”

It should be clear by now that during the course of the London Gaza demonstrations, police employed irresponsible tactics of intimidation, the 10th of January being no different.⁸² The above sample (further

accounts detailed in Appendix A) merely illustrates the incessant, indiscriminate and undifferentiated use of force engaged in by MPS officials during the London Gaza demonstrations.⁸³ Yet again, law enforcement officials appear to have contravened Articles 2, 3, 5 and 7 of the UN Code of Conduct and various principles of the UN Basic Principles. Again, MPS were responsible for affecting social dynamics by treating crowd participants as one inherently irrational (and dangerous) physical entity. MPS officials failed to operate under the ACPO Manual, which advocates a calculated approach to disorder reduction.⁸⁴ So often, during the London Gaza demonstrations, protests started peacefully and with good intent, before escalating into collective conflict. MPS officers had failed to adopt a graded approach, they failed to facilitate protestors, they had failed in communication and they had failed to separate the agitating minority from the peaceful majority. As such, they subjected the diverse peaceful majority (not just on 10 January 2009) to the indiscriminate baton charge.

In English law, the law on the use of force takes the common law standard of ‘reasonable force’; this standard has been given a statutory basis for the *constable* in section 117 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) and for the *individual* in section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967. What constitutes ‘reasonable force’ is treated on a case-by-case basis and relies on ‘...common sense’ and ‘...the particular facts and circumstances’.⁸⁵ Based on the accounts above and throughout this report, one would be hard pressed to deem the force employed by MPS officials as reasonable. Denis O’Connor’s ‘Adapting to Protest’, highlights the, ‘... absence of clear standards on the use of force for individual officers operating in the public order policing environment’.⁸⁶ The report then recommends, ‘the adoption of a set of fundamental principles on the use of force which run as a golden thread through all aspects of police business...based on the minimum use of force...for a measured and calculated route to escalation...’.⁸⁷ This would necessarily entail that, ‘officers need to be well versed...[in]...the continuum use of force model’.⁸⁸ The proposal represents an important development, bearing in mind the United Kingdom’s traditional ‘...preference...for a less prescriptive “conflict resolution model”’.⁸⁹ For example, the ACPO Manual illustrates such a conflict management model.⁹⁰ However, while IHRC recognises the importance of this change, it emphasises that the continuum use of force model developed should not be too prescriptive so as to prove impracticable.

‘The police often struggle for legitimacy because they are required to undertake acts that would be extraordinary or even illegal if done by others.’⁹¹ The latter statement is understandable in the pursuit of legitimate police aims; however, MPS conduct during the London Gaza demonstrations dealt a severe blow to perceptions of police legitimacy. Worryingly, the following accounts show just how prevalent police tactics affect perceived legitimacy:

“... The police where [*sic*] extremely violent and willingly pushed large crowds of protestors into and over rows of upturned barrier [s], this is when many injuries occurred. At least four police helmets, 3 riot shields and some other filth apparel was confiscated [*sic*] by the protestors who used it to defend themselves against the pressing riot cops. Fireworks where [*sic*] thrown at police and the bastards in uniform where [*sic*] made to dance as they went off. Just an onlooker myself, but one with a lot of hatred for the police and respect for the actions of the day. As long as people remember to be selective when choosing targets and protect each others backs...” (ARA).

“The children getting crushed next to me were younger than 10. People were shouting “stop” and trying to tell the police that young kids were being crushed, but it seems that with their riot helmets on they didn’t hear...” (Citizen Smith).

“... I was down some of the side streets acting as a medic some of the time, reluctant to get kettled. Unfortunately, the mass of people down these streets were baton charged many times, and chased my [sic] mounted coppers. I had to treat a couple of people with head wounds; one woman appeared to be having a fit (and was taken off by police medics); and I saw two young women being carried away from the chaos looking very distressed – their friends say they’d been trampled on by police horses.

“... It was incredible to see that people were angry enough to fight back after being clobbered, and wonderful to listen to “Free Palestine!” and anti-filth slogans echoing down the side streets...” (Action Medic).

“... who the hell do the police think they are protecting/policing? Are the British public safer? Are the British public represented by people who speak for them? No on both counts, the British people have been betrayed AGAIN by traitors acting for foreign powers...” (JL)

“... the police operation was designed to prevent any sort of meaningful protest...

“... the TSG [Territorial Support Group] and level 2 public-order trained officers who were out attacking people yesterday have all the moral capacity of a snail. Most, if not all, TSG officers enjoy what they do, it gets the adrenalin running, and they are trained to view the people they attack as scum...

“... they create a set of unsafe conditions which precipitate a dangerous situation when even without their assault women and children, not to mention men, were put in peril quite deliberately from being crushed...

“... Peoples dislike of the police does not arise from a vacuum. It comes from events like yesterday’s, from arbitrary policing on an everyday basis, from experience of the gulf between ordinary people and the police...I suggest most people would agree with me that when under attack only a fool refuses to defend themselves.” (upthera).

Perceptions of police legitimacy come under further question, for example, when citizens hear stories like that of Ray Davies. On 10 January 2009, Ray Davies (Vice Chair of CND Cymru), a 79 year old man, suffered head injuries, concussion and other cuts (by MPS) when trapped with scores of others against the Israeli Embassy gates.⁹² Ray tried to mediate between protestors and police, explaining that the police were not the intended target of shoes thrown (an emblematic sign of defiance). He asked if he may be allowed to proceed to the Israeli Embassy in order to deliver a letter to the ambassador requesting a ceasefire in Gaza. Subsequently, riot police subjected Ray to a tirade of abuse and said, ‘get back with the rest of the scum’. Eventually, following a collective disturbance, Ray was hit in the head with batons and cut in the face with the sharp edge of a weighty riot shield, as two officers kicked him to the floor.⁹³ On discharge from hospital, Ray said, ‘I have experienced the war zones in the Occupied Territories; I have been shot at, teargassed and beaten by the Israeli Defence Force; but I never expected such abuse and brutal treatment in Britain from our own police force’.⁹⁴ Photographic evidence merely confirms MPS’ questionable tactics. An image caught by freelance photographer, Angelos Rallis, shows PC TW372/572 attacking an elderly man with his truncheon.⁹⁵ Witnesses described this elderly man as ‘harmless and a bit slow’, and commented that as TW372/572 went on the attack, PC T472 was calling him back (officer to the left of the picture) shouting out, ‘He’s ok! He’s ok!’

The above clearly illustrates that on 10 January 2009, law enforcement officials employed undifferentiated, unreasonable and indiscriminate force upon a gathering comprising peaceful men, women, children and the elderly. MPS officials were culpable for incidents allegedly amounting to police brutality. Moreover, police employed unsafe tactics of ‘kettling’ with the subsequent mass collection of protestors’ personal information. Consequentially, it is a concern that MPS officials are arbitrarily handling powers granted by virtue of section 50 of the Police Reform Act 2002 (PRA). Police failed to facilitate protestors leading to an ominous health and safety situation and, contrary to international standards, were inattentive to protestors’ medical needs (also required by Chapter 4, 8.10, ACPO Manual). The resultant effect dealt a significant blow to perceptions of police legitimacy.

(vi) 11 January 2009

On 11 January 2009, a number of pro-Israeli demonstrators gathered at Trafalgar Square in order to ‘...reclaim the public space from their political opponents’.⁶ A smaller contingent of pro-Palestinian counter demonstrators assembled at one section of the square to voice their concern over pro-Israeli speakers’ defence of the military offensive in Gaza.

Observer MA notes:

“1. Police stopping and searching visibly Palestinian protestors

Note: The man was carrying a placard.

“Officers: ZD 45, ZD 426

“2. Police stopping and searching a group of Palestinian protestors who just came out of the tube station.

“Police were aggressive in their language and attitude, using words such as ‘you! You! You! Come here’ and ‘shut up!’

“The young men were also becoming upset and swearing at the officer.

“When the officer was asked why they were stopped out of everyone. He replied ‘*because you’re a different kind of people*’ [*emphasis added*].

“Officers: ZD 45, ZD 426

“Other officer who later joined: YR90, KG101, KG112, KG4, YR180 and KR180

“The group was later escorted to the pen.

“An officer (bleached hair) approached one of the demonstrators and pushed in. That officer *did not have a collar number*, and refused to show it [*emphasis added*].

“3. Police officer pushing protest organiser – GK29

“4. Stop and search of a man walking around with a pole (he looked Jewish)

“Officers: U5618, U5896

“5. Told by an inspector that we cannot be in certain areas as their tactical plan involves later moving vehicles into certain areas. We could be hurt.

“6. CST [Community Security Trust] approached us, and suggested that we are meant to be on the Palestinian side, as we may be hurt on this side. He then complained to an officer. The officer allowed us to continue.

“7. Visibly Muslim protestors were stopped and search[ed] before being escorted to a police van. He did not remerge for some time, and the van was moving. (*it later transpired that he was strip searched*) [*emphasis added*].

“Officers: U2481 & U2768

“Police Van: U235

“8. Police began cordoning off certain sections, rerouting Muslims, but allowing Israeli protestors to continue unhindered.

“9. *Violent arrest of a Jewish anti-israel demonstrator* [*emphasis added*].

When we arrived on the scene, he was on the floor with a microphone next to him, and 4 officers on top of him.

The young man was shouting, ‘I am Jewish, I am Jewish’, but that he did not support Israel, and then shouted in hewbrew [*sic*].

“Officers carried him away, *arresting him for breach of the peace* [*emphasis added*].

“Officers: ZD45, KG112, KG4 and others (couldn’t get the numbers as it happened very quickly).

Photographer Abbas states:

“I arrived at Trafalgar Square around 9:40am on Sunday 11th January 2009. As independent media I wanted to video the rally which was to begin at 11am. I took some stills and video of the frozen fountains and the preparation of the demo - the bundles of placards being brought out, etc.

“Around 9:55 a CST steward stopped me and called a police officer claiming I was videoing their security arrangements. Two policemen took me aside, one of them grabbing my left arm (HT-68). They said they were stopping me under section 44 on [*sic*] the terrorism law. One of them took my camcorder and demanded I show him the video I had taken. I showed it to him and he said it showed policemen and CST behind the frozen fountains - it was borderline arrestable offence but they hadn’t decided yet whether they were going to arrest me.

“I explained I regularly video demos and I was just taking the initial shots before the rally begins which I wanted to cover - they didn’t accept by explanation.

“They asked me to hold my arms out and open my jacket, they frisked by arms and searched my jacket and pockets. They found a leaflet someone from the pro-Israel rally had given me a few

minutes earlier, one policemen explained to the other that it *was okay it was from the pro-israel side [emphasis added]*. I wanted to video the search and interrogation but they wouldn't allow me access to my camcorder. They searched my wallet and found an arabic prayer transliterated in english and asked what it said - I explained it was a prayer my wife had placed in my wallet which I couldn't translate.

“They asked for my name, date of birth, address and where I was born and what I did. I explained to HT-68 that I didn't understand the law, legally was I obliged to give him my details? He replied *yes under the law I had to provide him my details*, so I obliged [*emphasis added*]. They asked if I had ever previously been arrested, I said no. They said they were putting my details through two of their databases - the search came back clean. They told me to stay put whilst they got the police cameraman to arrive. I again asked whether legally I had to submit to them taking mug shots of me - *Ht-68 again said yes [emphasis added]*.

“Whilst we waited for the cameraman to arrive I asked the policeman if after the search I could re-enter the rally to video the speeches. He got upset and said if they decide not to arrest me and they hadn't decided yet then I would have to leave Trafalgar Square. I asked what if I videoed from the balcony overlooking the square, he got more upset and said no or *they would arrest me for breach of the peace [emphasis added]*. I noticed across the road they were setting up the counter-demo so I asked the policeman if I could video that - again he said no *I would have to leave area and not return [emphasis added]*.

“They demanded I delete the video clips I had taken of the rally in front of them. I deleted one of the shorter clips in front of them, they assumed all of them were deleted.

“The police cameraman arrived after about 15 minutes, only after I reluctantly allowed them to photograph me did they finally release me at 10:35am, handing me a receipt of the stop and search and *ordering me to leave Trafalgar Square and not return [emphasis added]*. I crossed the road to the counter-demo to ask legal advice from the IHRC regarding what had just happened.”

Not unlike events of 7 January 2009, the above accounts seem to indicate an implicit MPS bias against the pro-Palestinian contingent. It is now apparent that in the course of the London Gaza demonstrations, pro-Israeli processions were offered greater facilitation in comparison to the pro-Palestinian demonstrations. It is worrying that the MPS might have considered pro-Palestinian protestors as inherently irrational and dangerous, therefore implying that only the pro-Israeli quarter were in need of protection. The MPS Diversity and Equality Strategy 2009-2013 states, ‘diversity and equality are not just words; they are critical to our ability to police London effectively...we want all communities to be confident that we will always treat them fairly, with dignity and respect, making sure that everyone has access to our services’.⁹⁷ IHRC's philosophy is consonant with this; however, IHRC is concerned that (especially) on 7 and 11 January 2009, equality was absent in the actions of MPS.

In *R (on the application of Gillan and another) v. Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis and another*, Lord Bingham said, ‘the public must not be vulnerable to interference by public officials acting on any personal whim, malice, predilection or purpose other than that for which the power was conferred. That is what ... is meant by arbitrariness, which is the antithesis of legality’. In regard to this, IHRC expresses concern over reports of MPS officials' arbitrary handling of the laws. Observer MA catalogued numerous instances where the police exercised their wide-ranging powers to stop and search. Police powers to stop and search are

governed by Part I of PACE with wider powers conferred by virtue of section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 (CJPOA). Indubitably, the Terrorism Act 2000 (TA) confers the widest powers to stop and search. Under section 44 of TA, the requirement for 'reasonable grounds' of suspicion and other criteria were removed thus enhancing the act's potential for misuse. Importantly, section 44 was invoked to stop a photographer (Abbas) on the request of a Community Security Trust (CST) steward.⁹⁸ This was on the pretence that he was videoing their security arrangements at Trafalgar Square. Ministry of Justice statistics have revealed that in 2008, there was a threefold increase in the use of section 44, with less than 0.1% of those stopped arrested for terrorism misdemeanours. Furthermore, these statistics showed that black or Asian persons were four times more likely to be stopped than white individuals were.⁹⁹ IHRC is also concerned by police handling of the common law power to arrest for breach of the peace. This concern is highlighted by the following incident that took place at the pro-Israeli demonstration on 11 January 2009.

Dovid Von Neumann, a young Jewish man, stood up on the ridge of the Trafalgar Square fountain and proceeded to sing a common child's Chanukah song entitled, 'Sevimon sov sov sov' (spinning-top, spin spin spin). Dovid's intention was to portray the irony of '...how the current Israeli invasion into Gaza was named after a child's toy made from a highly toxic material, lead, and how Palestinian children have been at the mercy of such randomly falling deadly devices... 'it's as if Israel had the lead sevimon in mind as a metaphorical present to Palestinian children'. He also accused Rabbi Sacks (speaker at the pro-Israeli rally), who claimed that British Jews supported Israel's military offensive (Operation Cast Lead), of being unrepresentative of the Jewish community. Pro-Israeli demonstrators then pushed Dovid into the iced Trafalgar Square fountain and CST stewards forcibly wrestled him into police custody. As a CST steward grabbed him, Dovid kissed the steward on each cheek, the customary way of greeting another Jew. In response, the CST steward demolished his megaphone and hauled him into the crowd.¹⁰⁰ The crowd then collectively dragged Dovid onto the pavement as he stridently and repeatedly implored, 'Ani gam Yehudi!' (I am also Jewish). MPS officials then arrested Dovid under breach of the peace and carried him away.¹⁰¹

In 1982, the Court of Appeal said, '...even in these days when affrays, riotous behaviour and other disturbances happen all too frequently, we cannot accept that there can be a breach of the peace unless there has been an act done or threatened to be done which either actually harms a person, or in his presence his property, or is likely to cause such harm, or which puts someone in fear of such harm being done'.¹⁰² It is clear that Dovid, a peaceful protestor, was exercising his right to freedom of expression (Article 10, ECHR). Moreover, Dovid did not commit or threaten any act, which harmed a person, his property, or was likely to cause harm or augment the fear of such harm being done. The reaction from the pro-Israeli contingent was not one inspired by fear; rather, it was inspired by anger, as it has been reported that (later) the dispersing pro-Israeli demonstrators taunted the Jewish counter demonstrators, calling them 'the enemy within'.¹⁰³ In fact, as a result of being pushed into the icy fountain, which was potentially dangerous, manhandled by CST stewards, and then dragged onto the pavement by demonstrators; Dovid had suffered harm to his person and his property (broken megaphone) such as to augment the fear of yet more harm being done. Not only does this incident illustrate MPS officials' arbitrary handling of the common law breach of the peace, it also shows the implicit bias held towards pro-Palestinian protestors. In 'Adapting to Protest', Denis O'Connor recognized '...a number of specific concerns regarding the inappropriate use of police powers...'.¹⁰⁴ It is hoped that these 'specific concerns' will soon be addressed, and that appropriate safeguards will be put in place to prevent further incidents of arbitrariness.

The above clearly illustrates that on 11 January 2009, law enforcement officials approached events with predetermined bias towards pro-Palestinian protestors. It is also apparent that MPS officials failed to inform themselves of the norms of pro-Palestinian participants and the legitimate intentions that accompany such norms. Furthermore, law enforcement officials were also responsible for the arbitrary handling of the laws.

ANCILLARY MATTERS

i) The Role and Function of Forward Intelligence Teams (FITs)

IHRC is concerned about the role and function of FITs and their potential impact on Article 8 (right to respect for private and family life), Article 10 (freedom of expression), Article 11 (freedom of peaceful assembly and association) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) of the ECHR. For the duration of the London Gaza demonstrations, there was an obvious and extensive presence of FITs.¹⁰⁵ On occasion, IHRC observers noted that visibly Muslim activists were closely studied; for example, an IHRC volunteer had to give her details, as she was video recorded for selling merchandise. She claimed that members from other organisations were not harassed for selling their merchandise. Moreover, she claims that FIT members dealt with her in an aggressive and intimidating fashion.

Subsequent to the BBC protest in Trafalgar Square (24 January 2009), a group of pro-Palestinian protesters were surrounded, cornered into a side street (near the theatre in Leicester Square) and made to line up against the wall. Each protester was ‘meticulously’ video-recorded and photographed. Pictorial evidence clearly depicts this scene and a witness stated that members of the pro-Palestinian contingent were made to say something in front of the camera.¹⁰⁶ IHRC is concerned that FITs may be overreaching powers granted by virtue of section 50 PRA. Furthermore, IHRC expresses disquiet over reports of harassment and house raids of those who had provided the MPS with personal details for the duration of the London Gaza demonstrations.

Other quarters have expressed similar concern, as it is felt that their overt surveillance represents the antithesis to facilitation. For example, it is contended that their tactics impede lawful protest and, ‘are designed to intimidate people and prevent lawful dissent’.¹⁰⁷ Regarding prevalent surveillance practices, Liberty filed an unsuccessful application for judicial review¹⁰⁸, however, in May 2009, the Court of Appeal restricted surveillance functions; Lord Collins of Mapesbury describing the police presence as having a ‘chilling effect’ on lawful protesters.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, ‘The Economics of Mass Surveillance’ revealed that the close surveillance of 24 political activists impacts and invades the privacy of some 1,200 people in their social network who, ‘...also find themselves being under surveillance by proxy’.¹¹⁰ Consequentially, policy makers will find this residual surveillance very difficult to justify among the collective conscience of civil society. In ‘Adapting to Protest’, O’Connor acknowledges the existing lucid deficiency in the role and function of FITs. He concludes that such deficiency generates the conditions for FITs to act outside the law and he calls for illumination of the existing legal framework.¹¹¹

ii) Harassment of Press and Freelance Photographers

Photographers enjoy a common law right to take photographs on a public right of way for personal or commercial purposes. In *DPP v Jones*, HL held that the public could enjoy a public highway for any reasonable purpose, provided the purpose did not constitute a private or public nuisance or obstruct the highway.¹¹² In regard to press photographers, the ACPO Police Media Guidelines states:

“Members of the media have a duty to take photographs and film incidents and [police officers] have no legal power or moral responsibility to prevent or restrict what they record. It is a matter for their editors to control what is published or broadcast, not the police. Once images are recorded, [the

police] have no power to delete or confiscate them without a court order, even if [the police] think they contain damaging or useful evidence.”¹¹³

In light of the above, it is a concern that law enforcement officials impeded a number of photographers, conducting their legitimate business, during the London Gaza demonstrations. These were not isolated incidents, and so, the nature of the impediments constituted harassment.

We have already documented the events surrounding the arbitrary invocation of section 44 TA on a photographer (Abbas), hence, there is no need to pursue the matter any further. However, there are numerous other instances of police harassment. Photographer OM said, ‘I was just a camera man, even had my stand, I had nowhere to go, but he didn’t care (ID No. U 1087).¹¹⁴ He smacked me a few times which forced me back’. On 24 January 2009, at the BBC protest, a FIT member who demanded to see a photograph that had been taken of him forcibly handled freelance photographer, Justin Tallis. Tallis refused to show the officer the photograph, saying that as he was a press photographer, he had a right to photograph police officers.¹¹⁵ Accordingly, the officer then forcefully tried to apprehend the camera before eventually conceding.¹¹⁶ On 29 December 2008, officer KF-652 arbitrarily stopped and searched an Al-Jazeera producer.¹¹⁷ The producer repeatedly asked the officer for information as to why he was being searched. This information was not forthcoming, instead, the officer threatened the producer with being handcuffed and his personal details were recorded. Furthermore, the negligent behaviour of MPS officials was all too apparent. Freelance photographer, Angelos Rallis, commented on MPS’ inability to control the crowds, and their lack of preparation for the vast crowds that arrived at the Israeli embassy on 10 January 2009. He said, ‘The police had positioned the barriers in such away [*sic*] making it impossible for protesters to move out of the path of incoming charging riot police’. As he tried to get out of the way of charging riot police, Rallis was struck on the head by a hard object. The situation in some cases was so severe that according to Rallis, even the medical police staff were made anxious by police use of force. Finally, photographer L states:

“... I got crushed at the embassy and...the barricades were moved by protestors for the right reasons to prevent further crushing...the police behaviour was over the top – charging at a penned in crowd (in front of the Israeli embassy) was unwarranted, provocative and extremely dangerous. I’m a photographer and that’s why I was at the front and my ribs are still sore and I owe a big thank you to two very big Muslim lads who protected me and got me out to the side. I was probably the last person to escape before the lid was put on the kettle (I’ve had practice...) and as for horse charges well it’s one of their favourite weapons...”

iii) Arbitrary Handling of the Laws

This particular concern is not one that is novel or isolated in practice. For example, misuse of section 14 POA has been a recurring theme in public order policing and has generated much discussion.¹¹⁸ ‘Adapting to Protest’ highlighted the prevalent uncertainty over public order policing. This is especially so when it comes to law enforcement officials’ understanding of their human rights obligation, particularly with regard to Article 11 ECHR.¹¹⁹ Already, we have dealt with a number of instances of police misuse, namely, those concerning section 44 TA, section 50 PRA, section 60 CJPOA and common law breach of the peace. However, with regard to the application of the latter common law, IHRC would like to raise a further instance of police misuse.

On 24 January 2009, near the end of the BBC protest in Trafalgar Square, a young girl in her early teens

(as described by witnesses) was arrested for breach of the peace.¹²⁰ She was arrested for performing her own rendition of a hip hop ('Free Palestine') song. Unnecessarily, a relatively large number of MPS officials surrounded her and escorted her to a nearby police van. Her fellow protestors and friends then gathered around the van questioning the police of her crime. Reportedly, they pleaded with officers repeatedly stating, 'she was just rapping a song' and 'she is just a young kid'. This application of the common law is particularly puzzling since the girl did not commit nor threaten to commit an act, which harmed a person, his/her property or was likely to cause such harm or increase the fear of such.

IHRC is also concerned by received reports that certain MPS officials policing the London Gaza demonstrations, at various times, did so, without their shoulder badges or deliberately obscured them from view. These same officials were observed at various times (for the duration of the demonstrations) in bands, agitating crowd participants and behaving provocatively. It is disturbing enough that there exist agitators amid crowd participants, however, MPS officials behaving in a similar fashion only serves to drain public confidence in the police service. There should be an unambiguous internalised structure of command and control and other safeguards to prevent further occurrence of this matter.

iv) Role and Relationship of the MPS with the Community Security Trust (CST)

IHRC is still concerned over the role and relationship of the MPS with the CST. These concerns were initially raised as part of IHRC's report, 'Muslim Profiling'.¹²¹ IHRC is still anxious about the CST's emphasis on 'physical security' for the protection of the Jewish community.¹²² They are still viewed, '...as nothing more than a vigilante group set on scaring off legitimate protest to Israeli atrocities, sanctioned at the same time by the MPS'.¹²³

Jewish pro-Palestinian activist GT states:

"We must start raising the question of this Community Security Trust – who are nothing but Israeli ex-military in the main, thugs and overtly Zionist. We should embarrass the Metropolitan Police into dropping their co-operation and work with them. They are not neutral they are merely Israeli Embassy boover boys.

"I've looked at the accounts of the CST and they reveal virtually nothing other than they are loaded. On the Charity Commission site their trustees are allowed to hide their identities..."

Jewish pro-Palestinian activists IWN and FD state:

"This evening FD and I were turned away from a panel discussion on Gaza, chaired by Rabbi Danny Rich of Liberal Judaism, by two CST (Community Security Trust) men acting in their usual high-handed arrogant fashion.

"We arrived shortly after the meeting began...we were genuinely interested in listening and possibly asking some questions and had no intention of being disruptive.

"Since we had previously been at a picket in Parliament Square, I was carrying...[a]...banner and poles in bags. While waiting for FD, I approached the CST guys in a friendly fashion, saying I would like to park the poles somewhere before going into the hall as obviously I did not want them with me at the meeting. They asked how I heard of the meeting and I said I'd read about

it on Rabbi Rich's website and was very interested to hear the discussion. They asked if my name was on the list and I said I understood my friend's name plus one had been put on it in advance by a rabbi friend of hers. While we waited for FD they said they would have to search my bag and I said fine and drew their attention at once to the banner, which I said I would also like to leave outside with the poles. They immediately said "You can't go in". I explained again that I wanted to leave the banner and poles outside and I didn't see that they had the right to stop me attending an important discussion, but they were adamant that they had decided and that was it.

"When FD arrived, she joked that IWN was not going to hit anyone with the poles and could leave them at the back of the room, later pointing out that they could just be curtain poles from John Lewis! She then told them that her name had been put on the list by a rabbi, who then appeared and confirmed this, but the CST continued to deny us entry and threatened us with the police. Things got a bit fraught and I went to ask the building reception staff if they could provide a place to leave the banner and poles. They said that as long as I was allowed into the meeting they could put them in a locked store room for me.

"I went back to report this but it made no difference to the CST men who were arguing with FD about their right to decide who attended the meeting. She had pointed out to them, as she had in previous confrontations, that they don't own the building, it was not their meeting and they aren't police, so what right did they have to order us not to go in? They even blocked the stairway so she could not go down!

"A police officer then arrived and a colleague of Rabbi Rich's came out. Alarmed by the fracas she decided to uphold the CST decision, which was unfortunate given that it would not have occurred without their determination from the start to bar us as soon as they worked out that we were activists. The CST bullies need to be challenged and stood up to. They had lied to the police officer, (and no doubt to the organisers), telling him that we intended to unfurl the banner inside the hall (although they had no idea what kind of banner it was), but even though we explained again that it would be left in a store room if we were allowed in, permission was denied and [we] had no choice but to leave.

"The CST were now saying that the banner was not the issue, but they did not want FD in there! So first it was the banner, then it was FD's attendance that was the issue! They sneered when they said her name and talked to her in a condescending manner. Apparently they told the policeman that they had had dealings with FD before. They had indeed, as she will not accept their *self-appointed 'authority' to go beyond their basic security duties [emphasis added]*.

"Outside the building, as we chatted amicably with the police officer who seemed not terribly enamoured of the CST methods, a...friend came out having attended the first part of the meeting. She had been allowed in without having her name on any list, so it is clear that the list business was a red herring anyway.

"The whole incident is just another example of how the *CST act like a private Zionist police force having no regard for the desirability of open discussion within the Jewish community and intent on censoring critics of Israel [emphasis added]*. We hope that Liberal Judaism will not see the need to call on them in similar circumstances in future."

The above accounts illustrate that the CST continue to have ‘...an intimidatory effect...due to their attitude and conduct...’.¹²⁴ Earlier, we considered the aggressive reaction from CST stewards to Dovid Von Neumann’s peaceful protest; this was disconcerting because CST stewards dangerously pushed Dovid into the icy Trafalgar Square fountain before dragging him into an irate crowd. Disappointingly, we have also seen a CST steward’s capricious suggestion that photographer (Abbas) was videoing CST security arrangements go unchallenged, as officer HT 68 too readily invoked section 44 TA. In light of the continued opposition the CST face from Jewish pro-Palestinian activists, it is clear that they do *not* draw comprehensive support from the Jewish community. Therefore, IHRC strongly recommends that MPS re-evaluate their role and relationship with the CST.

RECOMMENDATIONS

IHRC recommends that the police service adopt and implement ‘Adapting for Protest’. The HMCIC submission represents an attempt to clarify the legal framework and create a strategy ‘...anchored in public consent...’. However, IHRC urges the police service to seriously reconsider the tactic of corralling or ‘kettling’, which continues to challenge the right to liberty and security enshrined in International and European instruments.

IHRC urges the police service to adopt a strategy that offers a graded ‘tactical’ profile. Such a strategy should be designed for the peaceful facilitation of protest. This would include scope for self-policing, ‘dynamic risk assessment’, communication and dialogue with participants before, during and after collective gatherings. Such an approach would serve to enhance perceptions of police legitimacy and reduce incidence of intimidation.

IHRC recommends that the police service develop and implement a use of force continuum with a strong presumption on minimum force. Progression across the continuum should only occur when absolutely necessary and with the full knowledge of crowd participants. However, such a scale needs to avoid unwarranted prescription, and instead aim to strike the right balance between the conflict resolution model and a continuum outright. It is vital that when police decide to engage with such a continuum, they do so with the full understanding of crowd participants. As part of a graded ‘tactical’ profile and subject to ‘dynamic risk assessment’, MPS officials will need to clearly enunciate their intentions when shifting across the continuum. In doing this, MPS officials must fully justify their actions to crowd participants. Achieving this balance would reduce incidence of undifferentiated and indiscriminate force.

IHRC calls for transparency and accountability from holders of public office. IHRC urges a full and thorough investigation into events leading up to and including events that took place in the Hyde Park underpass on 3 January 2009.

IHRC calls on the police service to redress any implicit or explicit institutionalised bias towards members of the Muslim community, supporters of the Palestinian cause and other minority and majority groups. IHRC recommends that the police service inform themselves of the cultural standards of crowds and of the genuine goals that will run from these standards. IHRC maintains that equality should be the seminal determining factor in dealing with the minority and majority communities.

IHRC calls for clarification into the role and function of forward intelligence teams. FITs continue to pose a challenge to the facilitation of peaceful protests. They also continue to draw criticism for their intimidatory presence and dubious tactics. The police exercise a legitimate function in protecting the collective community; however, such *overt* utilisation of FITs only proves antagonistic to the peaceful facilitation of protests.

IHRC urges that police service officials are made fully aware of the nature and scope of their powers. Police misuse of statutory and common law powers is of high incidence and serves to damage perceptions of police legitimacy. It is a concern that these powers are being selectively used on various groups, and safeguards should be introduced to prevent further incidence.

IHRC calls on MPS officials to abandon the harassment of press and freelance photographers. Photographers, in conducting their legitimate business, play an important role for civil society and such a role should not be viewed as an impediment. Senior officers at the ACPO have been unequivocal on this matter, however, on the operational front, incidents are still reported.

IHRC recommends that the police service reassess their role and relationship with the CST. The CST does not draw comprehensive support from the Jewish community, and so, cannot be said to represent the community. With their emphasis on 'physical security', they continue to project themselves in an antagonistic and aggressive manner.

IHRC draws attention to the importance of pre-demonstration briefing. Officers called upon to police demonstrations should be briefed under a harmonised aggregate of values related to the peaceful facilitation of protests. Such values should operate under the human rights framework with particular regard to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly. Officers should be mindful that in their *official capacity*, they should place any prejudices or indifferences (to causes, particular groups or persuasions) aside for the sole purpose of facilitating a peaceful protest. The necessary risk assessment prior to a demonstration should not be static. There should never be a preconceived assumption that certain groups will behave in a particular way, as this will inevitably prove counterproductive. Furthermore, while addressing the pre-demonstration risk assessment, the influence of external factors should be limited. There should be no undue influence or exceptional relationships with any groups (for example, the CST) while assessing potential risks. All external influences that impact on the pre-demonstration risk assessment process should be in the public domain.

IHRC recommends the issuance of a definite internalised structure of command and control and other safeguards to prevent incidence of MPS officials sans shoulder badges. By agitating crowd participants, these officers operate outside of their official capacity in a provocative and aggressive manner. Their actions only serve to damage perceptions of police legitimacy.

ENDNOTES:

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- ⁴ 'Gaza Attacks: Israeli Strikes spark protests across world' [online] (London, Daily Telegraph, 2008). Available from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/israel/4016850/Gaza-attacks-Israeli-strikes-spark-protests-across-world.html> [Accessed 3 December 2009]
- ⁵ For a fairly comprehensive assemblage [online], see <http://www.squidoo.com/The-Demonstrations-on-Gaza> [Accessed 1 December 2009]
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- ⁷ C. Stott, *Crowd Psychology & Public Order Policing: an overview of scientific theory and evidence* [online] (Liverpool: University of Liverpool, 2009) p.11. Available from <http://www.liv.ac.uk/psychology/staff/CStott/HMIC%20Report%20Crowd%20Psychology%20-%20Final%20Submission%20Draft%20%2814-9%29.pdf> [Accessed 2 December 2009]
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- ¹⁰ IHRC, *Muslim Profiling: Questions Regarding Police Strategy and Policy with Regard to the Pro-Israel rally and Counter-demonstration on 6th May 2002*. (London, Islamic Human Rights Commission, 2nd Ed. 2009).
- ¹¹ See Amnesty International, *Greece: alleged abuses in the policing of demonstrations* [online] (London, Amnesty International, 2009). Available from <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR25/001/2009/en/5ceca451-887b-4636-b241-6ce3b1185f8c/eur250012009en.pdf> [Accessed 19 November 2009]
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- ¹⁴ Article 12(1) ICCPR
- ¹⁵ Article 19 (2) ICCPR
- ¹⁶ Article 21 ICCPR
- ¹⁷ Article 9 (1) ICCPR
- ¹⁸ Article 14 (2) ICCPR
- ¹⁹ GA Resolution 34/169, 1979.
- ²⁰ Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), *Manual of Guidance on Police use of Firearms*. (UK, ACPO, 2006), Chapter 1.1.1
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²⁴ M.D.A. Freeman, *Lloyd's Introduction to Jurisprudence*, (London, 7th Ed.,2001), p.112.

²⁵ J. Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, (P. Laslett (ed.), Cambridge, 1960), II, sect.4, p.287.

²⁶ J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, (M.Cranston, trans., Harmondsworth, 1968), bk.III, ch.4, p.112.

²⁷ See HMIC [online]. Available from <http://inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/about/> [Accessed 1 December 2009]

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²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

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⁴⁰ Generally see, C. Stott, *Crowd Psychology & Public Order Policing: an overview of scientific theory and evidence*, n.7 above.

⁴¹ See, National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA), *Practice Advice on Critical Incident Management* [online] (UK, NPIA, 2007). Available from

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⁴⁵ Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA), *MPA Response to HMIC report on policing public protest* [online] (London, MPA, 2009). Available from <http://www.mpa.gov.uk/publications/statements/091126/> [Accessed 1 December 2009]

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- ⁴⁸ C. Stott, *Crowd Psychology & Public Order Policing: an overview of scientific theory and evidence*, n.7 above, p.3.
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- ⁵² See Appendix B3, B4 & B5.
- ⁵³ ACPO, *Manual of Guidance on Police use of Firearms*, n.20 above, Chapter 2 1.2(c).
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- ⁵⁸ *Austin v Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis*, (2009) UKHL 5.
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- ⁶⁴ See Appendix B6.
- ⁶⁵ Rose, *Indiscriminate police brutality at Anti-Israel Protests*, n.60 above.
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- ⁶⁸ C. Stott, *Crowd Psychology & Public Order Policing: an overview of scientific theory and evidence*, n.7 above, p.7.
- ⁶⁹ See Appendix B7, B8 & B9.
- ⁷⁰ D. O'Connor (HMCIC), *Adapting to Protest – nurturing the British model of policing*, n.8 above, p.15.
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- ⁷⁴ T. Lay, 'Gaza Demo 7th January: Police run riot after Zionist counter protest' [online] (London, The Commune, 2009). Available from <http://thecommu.wordpress.com/2009/01/08/gaza-demo-7th-january-activists-arrested-after-zionist-counter-protest/> [Accessed 11 December 2009].
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- ⁸³ See Appendix B18, B19 & B20.
- ⁸⁴ ACPO, *Manual of Guidance on Police use of Firearms*, n.20 above, Chapter 2.1.2.
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- ⁸⁶ D. O'Connor (HMCIC), *Adapting to Protest – nurturing the British model of policing*, n.8 above, p.5.
- ⁸⁷ Ibid., p.7.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., p.15.
- ⁸⁹ B. Rappert, 'Police Use of Force', in T. Newburn & P. Neyroud, (eds.), *Dictionary of Policing*. (London, Willan, 2008), p.2.
- ⁹⁰ ACPO, *Manual of Guidance on Police use of Firearms*, n.20 above, Chapter 2.1.6.
- ⁹¹ B. Rappert, 'Police Use of Force', n.89 above, p.1.
- ⁹² See Appendix B21.
- ⁹³ See R. Davies & W. Lewis, 'Ray Davies, 79 injured by police in GAZA demo' [online] (UK, Indymedia, 2009). Available from <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2009/01/417992.html> [Accessed 2 December 2009].
- ⁹⁴ Ibid.
- ⁹⁵ See Appendix B22.
- ⁹⁶ Evening Standard, 'Demonstrators in anti-Hamas protest' [online] (London, Evening Standard, 2009). Available from <http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/standard/article-23616799-demonstrators-in-anti-hamas-protest.do> [Accessed 8 December 2009].
- ⁹⁷ MPS, *Achieving Equality, Improving Confidence: MPS Diversity and Equality Strategy 2009-2013*, n.78 above, p.1.
- ⁹⁸ See Appendix B23 & B24.
- ⁹⁹ See Liberty, *Section 44 – Terrorism Act 2000* [online] (London, Liberty, 2009). Available from <http://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/issues/6-free-speech/s44-terrorism-act/index.shtml> [Accessed 2 December 2009].
- ¹⁰⁰ See Appendix B25.
- ¹⁰¹ See Dovid, 'Young Jew sings Protest to Chief Rabbi, Gets Arrested' [online] (UK, Indymedia, 2009).

Available from <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2009/01/418015.html> [Accessed 7 December 2009].

¹⁰² See *Regina V Howell* [1981] 3 All ER 383.

¹⁰³ Dovid, 2009, *Young Jew sings Protest to Chief Rabbi, Gets Arrested*, n.101 above.

¹⁰⁴ D. O'Connor (HMCIC), *Adapting to Protest – nurturing the British model of policing*, n.8 above, p.122.

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix B26.

¹⁰⁶ See Appendix B27.

¹⁰⁷ See L. Catt, 'Police tactics seek to 'intimidate people and prevent lawful dissent'[online] (London, the Guardian, 2009). Available from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/mar/13/police-surveillance-protesters-activism> [Accessed 9 December 2009].

¹⁰⁸ See *Wood v Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis* [2008] EWHC 1105 (Admin).

¹⁰⁹ See *Wood v Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis* [2009] EWCA Civ 414, at para.92.

¹¹⁰ G. Danezis & B. Wittneben, *The Economics of Mass Surveillance and the Questionable Value of Anonymous Communications* [online]. Available from <http://weis2006.econinfosec.org/docs/36.pdf> [Accessed 9 December 2009].

¹¹¹ D. O'Connor (HMCIC), *Adapting to Protest – nurturing the British model of policing*, n.8 above, pp.126-134.

¹¹² See *DPP v Jones & Another* [1999] 2 CAR 348

¹¹³ ACPO, *ACPO Police Media Guidelines* [online] (UK, ACPO, 2006). Available from <http://www.epuk.org/Resources/819/acpo-police-media-guidelines> [Accessed 10 December 2009].

¹¹⁴ See Appendix B28.

¹¹⁵ The incident took place on 24 January 2009, before the introduction of section 76 of the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 on 16 February 2009 (which, in certain circumstances, could potentially make it an offence to photograph police officers). However, subsequent parliamentary discussions confirmed that section 58A TA did not affect journalists photographing police officers as part of his/her job.

¹¹⁶ See The British Journal of Photography (BJP), 'Another press photographer threatened by police' [online] (UK, BJP, 2009). Available from <http://www.bjp-online.com/public/showPage.html?page=836437> [Accessed 7 December 2009]. See also Appendix B29.

¹¹⁷ See Appendix B30.

¹¹⁸ See for example, M. Vallee, 'Journalists on the G20 front line' [online] (London, the Guardian 2009). Available from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/libertycentral/2009/apr/16/policing-g20-journalists> [Accessed 10 December 2009].

¹¹⁹ See D. O'Connor (HMCIC), *Adapting to Protest – nurturing the British model of policing*, n.8 above, pp.121-134.

¹²⁰ See Appendix B31 & B32.

¹²¹ IHRC, *Muslim Profiling*, n.10 above, pp.9-11.

¹²² For CST's emphasis on physical security see [online] <http://www.thecst.org.uk/index.cfm?content=1&Menu=1> [Accessed 7 December 2009].

¹²³ IHRC, *Muslim Profiling*, n.10 above, p.9.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

APPENDIX A:

Eyewitness Reports

The following are a selection of statements given to IHRC. Not all of those who gave statements wished them to be published. Not all the attacks reported to IHRC have been cited in this appendix or report.

1. The problem began with the street barricades,...until then it had been a peaceful demo. The police arrived with police dogs and that is when it started to get out of hand and the atmosphere became tense. They were using the dogs and extra force to move the crowd along, using abusive language and pushing people very hard.

I saw one protester high up on the lamp pole, before saying anything to the protester, the police used the dogs trying to intimidate him into coming down. The protester was clearly heard saying that he will come down willingly, but the police were shouting profanities (F*** off!) and pulling at his legs.

Police began pushing into the crowd, pushing us away from the embassy in a very aggressive manner, punching and randomly grabbing people by the hair. I had a flag in my hand, which they tried to pull off me but I held on to it. They grabbed me, thumbed me in the eye and ripped out a lot of hair (I noticed later at the station, my clumps of hair on my shoulder. On my part, I put up no resistance whatsoever, and only held on to my flag, the force used was disproportionate. They locked my arms behind my back and put me face down on the ground whilst I was shouting 'I'm not resisting'! They sprained my wrist and thumbs in the process. They then handcuffed me very tightly, with lacerations being noted by my doctor later, and I was taken to Charing Cross police station and imprisoned. I was released in the early hours of the next morning and had acquired a sprained wrist, a sore head (from officers pulling at his hair) and a tender eye (from officers poking him directly in the eye). [Anon, 28 December 2008].

2. Barriers were set up preventing demonstrators from crossing the road and protesting outside the gates of the Israeli Embassy. As the barriers were set up half a metre away from the curb, most protestors were on the pavement, in front of a shop called "Food Hall." This blocked the pavement.

The protestors although unhappy at being forced into such a tight alley way and away from the embassy sight, were very peaceful. The barriers were only pushed down by the protestors once they witnessed the arrest of one man (he was standing in front of the Embassy gates across the street) took off his shoe and threw it towards the gates. A few police officers were standing by the gate. About 6 officers jumped on him. Once protestors saw this they pushed against the barriers leading them to fall. The crowd then walked over towards the embassy gates. The police were limited in number and were clearly not ready for this development. The road was blocked and a few cars, including a Taxi were stuck in the middle of it all.

The protest went rather well until 3:45 when all of the police aggression and confusion began. The police attempting to bring the protest to an end, as opposed to letting people disperse naturally and slowly, formed a chain 2 or 3 lines deep and began to push the protestors away from Kensington Crescent and down Kensington High Street towards the direction of the Royal Garden Hotel. Many individuals including myself, attempted to leave the demonstration by walking to Kensington High Street Station. The police however had closed off[f] the road by forming a chain and were not allowing anyone past the

“Food Hall” shop. Rather than informing us that the protest was over and that they wanted us to leave in the direction of the Royal Garden Hotel they decided they were going to physically push us down the road. Much confusion arose as a consequence, as people could not understand why they were being pushed. No announcement saying the protest was over was announced by either the organisers or the police. Thus women, children and elderly protestors were being pushed by the police. The crowd not knowing where to go or what was being asked of them, began to panic and a lot of pushing occurred. Many of us tried articulating to the police that the protestors did not know what was going on, but there [sic] response was “we don’t care. Just move.” Of course, there was nowhere to move as I had a police line in front of me pushing me and people behind me. Many protestors tried to talk to the police but the police were not listening to our concerns. I heard many different police officers respond with a variety of worrying phrases such as “we don’t care just move,” and “move the fuck back.”

This occurred for about 5 minutes before things took a more sinister turn. A few Police officers began to indiscriminately kick and violently push with their arms. I even saw a police officer throw punches into the crowd. He was about 5.6 feet, stocky and had a clean shaven head. Naturally, a few individuals began to push back. The police began to grab individuals randomly from the crowd and attempt to arrest them. Naturally the crowd grabbed these individuals back and I saw them save two people from being arrested.

At this point a friend of mine grabbed my arm and we managed to get out of the crowd. We got to the back of the crowd and could no longer see what was occurring at the front line with the police. What we did not see was police officers from the back telling people to walk towards the Hotel. This would have made it easier for the crowd to know what was happening and would have prevented the pushing. [OM, 28 December 2009]

3. I attended the demonstration of 28 at 2pm when it was scheduled to start. I have been to many demonstrations outside the Israeli Embassy (or more precisely on Kensington Road) for various causes. Even before arriving I knew this would be a much larger event than normal and I wondered what space we would be given seeing as there would be at least a few hundred people attending.

As it happens I arrived at 2pm and did a head count of about 200 people. I stood at the back. As I made a phone call to a friend to see where he was (which took about 2-3 minutes) I would say another 100 people arrived. People were arriving in huge numbers.

However we had been given the same small space that a vigil of 15 or 20 people usually gets.

Very quickly there were too many people, all being pushed into a small space. Not too long into the demonstration, the crowd for some reason I wasn’t sure of at the time, walked through the barriers and crossed the road, thus taking up the space of the road as well as both sides of the pavement. By that time, I would say that there were between 2,000 to 3,000 people there, including many families with young children.

At no point was the crowd violent or aggressive. Some speeches were made, which ended abruptly and before the scheduled end time of the demonstration, and an order was issued by police officers standing by the Palace Gardens gate for the crowd to move back. However it appeared that police on the other sides of the demonstration were blocking the crowd from dispersing. As a result people in the midst of the crowd began getting squashed, and I feared there would be a crush. Luckily, someone at the front who I recognised as a veteran activist (not one of the organisers) shouted out to people not to move back but stand their ground. I think this possibly averted a very dangerous situation.

Eventually I was able to make my way to the edge of the crowd, where a line of police stood blocking protestors exit towards Kensington High Street Station. When anyone tried to cross, they became quite aggressive. They linked their arms and pushed into the crowd. At one point a man with a child on his shoulders asked to go through and was abruptly pushed away. Another protestor intervened to say to the police officer who had done that that there was no need to speak or act that way. He was slapped back and then pushed by the officer. He then retaliated by pushing back and a minor fracas ensued, which was broken up by other concerned protestors.

The line of police however continued to block anyone leaving and indeed anyone from joining. The police were essentially asking people to disperse before the demonstration was scheduled to end, and people were still arriving. The line of police on the side I was standing became increasingly aggressive, for no apparent reason. Whilst most demonstrators were quite frustrated that they couldn't leave (myself included – I had left my kids with my mum, and was expected back within a certain timeframe), they were not aggressive towards the police. The police's behaviour included pushing into the crowd as if to move them on, though the crowd was so large, there appeared nowhere for us to go.

At one point, a protestor climbed part way up a lamppost and held a banner on a pole. The police shouted at him to come down. Which he eventually started to do, at which point an officer started pulling him by his leg and shouting. I cannot see how pulling him was of any use, if anything it could have caused the protestor to fall and injure himself and maybe others in the vicinity. [UA, 28 December 2009].

4. I haven't been to a protest for well over a decade and so I felt kind of shy and didn't really know what to expect. Also, I'm not good in crowds and have an enormously large personal space and so I wasn't sure what kind of internal battles I would have to perform in order to stay long enough to say what I wanted to say to Israel – *that they daily strip themselves of their humanity by denying the Palestinians theirs.*

However, I soon discovered that a large group of people who have come together for an act of love towards humanity are different from other large groups of people. You smile and you crack jokes with strangers, you hold on to unknown people and you help each other sit and stand in small spaces. We overheard a Sky news reporter calling us 'an angry bunch' and for the first time that day we felt that emotion, since we couldn't recognise ourselves in the picture she was painting of the day. Perhaps anger against what Israel is doing is what motivated us all [to] come to the demo; but we came together in defiance and in our belief in the humanity of the Palestinians, and that was expressed by feelings of unity, of solidarity, and of happiness that we were all taking a stand and that we all cared. We felt no anger that day, but rather love and compassion, for we knew we were doing the just and the righteous thing.

The BBC says we clashed with police after storming a barrier – that is an outright lie. The truth is that we were exercising our right to peacefully protest when the police decided they'd had enough of us and started pushing against us. They formed a human wall and pushed as hard as they could so we were forced back, away from the other protestors, away from the embassy. They pushed even though many of us were peacefully sitting down (think a Ghandi-esque sit-in), they pushed even though there were small children and people in wheelchairs. They pushed against us so that we struggled to stay upright and unhurt, tripping over each other as we stood up or moved backwards. They pushed against us, and they brought the one piece of ugly to the whole afternoon. [Tank, 28 December 2008].

5. I was at the demo and was horrified [*sic*] by the police response towards peaceful demonstrators. Totally unjustified and unprovoked attacks against all including many women and children. [KZ, 28 December 2008]

6. I was at the protests on Sunday, Monday and Wednesday in front of the Israeli embassy – Sunday the police were VERY heavy handed, I felt the use of dogs and police on horses, as well as riot police seemed very extreme and only served to increase tension between protestors and police. I didn't see the so called 10 arrests, I did see 2 people in trouble with the police, one in handcuffs. The police shoved a young boy about hard in the head and he was crying. I also saw a woman and her son who'd been struck hard by the police and were crying. Every other day, police presence was heavy but thankfully no dogs/horses/riot gear. Police were provocative with one female protestor – female police officer [*sic*] came up into her face, aggressively, and told her to calm down. Another man was told his poster, which featured an injured Palestinian child, was incendiary and that he had to put it away or face arrest. The officer was very rude and disparaging towards this man. [MFC, 28 December 2009].

7. Me and Anon were at the front of the demonstration on the 28th. Police created conditions that riled the demonstrators (i.e. facing the protestors, being provocative, photographing the protestors, pushing the protestors who pushed back!). Police pushed us from the embassy gates into a confined space. They then flanked us from left and right. They were wearing full riot gear. The confinement caused people to trample on each other. We were made up of women, children, the old and infirm. By confining us they randomly handled us. Me and Anon were within the boundaries set by police. I was waving a Palestinian flag and the police tried to take it. They formed a circle around me; one got hold of the pole and took it. They never gave me a reason as to why they wanted the flag. Anon got into a brief scuffle with police trying to wrestle back the flag pole. I got away and the officer said, "I'm gonna get you!". I looked on as Anon had his back turned to the police. He didn't provoke them yet they grabbed him from his back and arrested him. [AU, 28 December 2008].

8. The London Metropolitan Police have managed the impossible – they made hundreds of people on a peaceful demonstration in the heart of London feel a bit [*sic*] like the people they were trying to represent – the Palestinians of Gaza. At the demonstration beside the gates of Palace Green, the leafy avenue of the embassies in Kensington, and the road leading to the Israeli embassy. The Israelis who may have been in the embassy – not many, one assumes, on Sunday evening – had nothing to worry about. The BBC website tells us that there were 2000 demonstrators there – a figure I very much doubt – then there were about two policemen for every demonstrators. The roads between Kensington Church Street and Kensington Gore – just over half-a-mile stretch, were all blocked and coked full of police forces, including the much loved dog unit, which indeed was drafted in to intimidate the protesters, once they really got into the rhythm of brutal policing. Beside me, a young man was trying to argue with the police using logics: "what are you afraid of? Of those people who have come to pray for the Gaza people? Are you not ashamed standing here, protecting the embassy of murderers?" It was to no avail, obviously. I have asked him to move along, telling him I had the feeling they are about to get nasty, and he will make an ideal target. He saw the point, seemingly, and retreated to the back. The demonstrators were made of people of all ages, from babies to very old and frail men and women, including two people in wheel chairs. At about 16:00, immediately after the official start of the protest, many of the protesters have kneeled down for the evening prayer, men and women in different groups, and prayed peacefully. It will be wrong to say that people were not angry – every one of us there was madly angry with the barbaric Israeli murder and destruction – but this did not translate itself into violence against the police, who kept the road to the embassy blocked by lines of sturdy policemen and women. There was something ugly in the air, though. As I was [a] few inches away from the policemen, taking one of the photographs below,

at about 16:20, I overheard one of the policemen advising a young man who found he could not get to the other side of the cordon, and just wanted to get there, being a tourist on shopping tour “just go back and scram, I tell you, do it now. There will some action in few minutes and you don’t want to be here”. So, it became clear to me that the violence will be manufactured pretty soon. It did indeed take less than five minutes, and the police cordon was swiftly reinforced by a large number, joining and starting to hit those close to them and push them with enormous force. Democracy in action, I suppose. I tried to take as many photographs as I could of this, until a well aimed hit on camera finished off the flash, so I continued to take photos as best I could, but many of the more brutal ones are, as a result, too dark. In the mad melee which followed, a SKY TV reporter in a beautiful red coat, in mid sentence facing her cameraman, was knocked down and about to be trampled upon by the advance of the forces of law and order, but for the efforts of the protesters which have surrounded her, hammered by the police for so doing, until she could be got up, very badly shocked and quite shaken. Things were happening so fast you could do nothing but [*sic*] get pushed, and pandemonium was really frightening, with the police behaviour something to be seen to be believed. It well reminded me of the last time I was on demo at one of the checkpoints in Palestine, which seemed apposite. I have tried to pose as a press photographer, with my large professional camera, as I attempted to film the police getting the dogs into the crowd, and snatching individual protesters and hammering them into the road surface, four policemen to one demonstrator. Blood was flowing freely by that point, and as [I] snatched a couple of shaky images, a huge policeman grabbed me with force I can only describe as brutal, and joined by another one rammed me back into the crowd but hitting me on the back for good measure. I could see some ten demonstrators at least led away, or rather dragged away with blood pouring from their wounds, and I moved rather quickly not to become the next prey. This is where I saw the CNN reporter, in mid sentence, on the background of all this violence, speaking of ‘extremists’, of Hamas and Hizbollah flags, as well as the flag of the ‘Palestinian State’. This was too much even for me, and I stopped him in his flow to ask since when did we have a Palestinian state, a comment he dod [*sic*] not really appreciate, but at least it got him packing and retreating [*sic*] before the obviously superior forces of the Met. At this point, there was nothing to do but disperse or be hit and arrested. The road was filled with shocked and shaken people, and one was saying to his friend as they ran past me “this is almost as bad as the Israelis”. He had a point. [Haim Bresheeth, 28 December 2009. Available from <http://gaza.haimbresheeth.com/gaza-carnage-archive/london-demos/london-demo-28-december>]

9. As soon as we arrived at High St Kensington station, the increased police presence was obvious. They lined the ticket barriers and the main ticket hall. We walked towards the demonstration point- the police had cordoned off half the street opposite the embassy gates with the protestors stuck behind police metal barriers-pavement deep.

There must have been approximately 100 police officers present, 10 just outside the gates, 5 on the right behind the crowd; about 25 scattered in front of the barriers. Press were on the left pavement opposite the protestors. We as observers (and after showing our letter) were permitted to stand and observe by PC KT 820. Two officers on horse back arrived and paced up and down but were mainly in front of the gates. The crowd size increased, with odd minor scuffles between one or two police officers and members of the public (we couldn’t hear what was going on between them). At one point a female officer said something to a protestor, who put his hands up as if to say he is wasn’t doing anything. He commences to shout slogans up close to her face. She bends down and calls for back up. At this point the protestors start pushing against the barrier and at least ten officers run towards the barrier, pushing back into the crowd. The crowd surges forward, police move barriers out of the way and form a human barrier, the two officers on horse back ride into the crowd trying to disperse them but were unsuccessful. The crowd surges forward and the police move back and gather in front of the gates. The police cant [*sic*] do anything

accept let the crowd forward where demonstration continues until 6.40pm. We were stuck at the back and on the sides so couldn't really see police reactions. Crowd became more rowdy as time went on...missiles were thrown at the police; two police caps were snatched and set alight; smoke bombs thrown at police (although where we were standing everyone was whispering the police had thrown the smoke bombs). Crowd was eventually broken up and dispersing. As we were walking back, 15 or so police officers charged into the crowd and grabbed a protestor (17-19 yrs) and fighting back a small group who were pulling the protestor back. The protestor was taken directly into a police van. The police regrouped and backed away into a side street where protestors were confronting them. [Observer 1, 29 December 2009].

10. There was a heavy police presence in comparison to the previous day's demonstration. Using barriers, a designated area was created for the protestors.

Unlike on Sunday, the pavement was kept clear and designated area placed on one lane of Kensington High street. The police tried their very best to get all protestors inside the designated area. One police officer insisted that I too remain within the barrier. I informed him that I was an observer and not a participant and thus could stand where I pleased. His reply was "anyone to do with this must be inside the designated area". After a few minutes I suggested I would move on and he stopped insisting.

There was only one incident in the first hour that I witnessed. It was of a man leaving the designated area with his placard shouting "Free Free Palestine". The police assorted [*sic*] him to the designated area both times.

An hour into the protest, the crowd at the centre of the demonstration began to push against the police barrier in their attempt to cross the road and get to the gates of the Israeli embassy. The police tried to prevent this and pushed back on the opposite side of the barrier. They soon lost control as the force of the crowd over powered them. The police started removing the barriers to prevent possible injuries.

The crowd managed to cross the road and force itself to the Embassy. The gates of the embassy were protected by strong barriers that were interlocked and were thus impenetrable. About 10 police officers found themselves stuck between the crowd and these barriers. Their colleagues quickly pulled them out. At this point many of the police officers apart from those on horseback and a few others, were in between the embassy gates and the barriers.

The crowd now and then attempted to push past the barriers in front of the gates, however this proved impossible. The police now and then raised their batons and shouted "get back" in their attempt to prevent the pushing.

It was all very peaceful until about 6:15. As much of the crowd began to disperse, a group of about 100 youth began to throw objects and flairs [*sic*]. The crowd threw an ignited traffic cone at the police and I saw them burn one officer's hat.

By this stage most protestors had left. The 100 strong crowd that remained, made up mostly of teenage youth, walked down Kensington High Street and stopped buses and cars. They turned on police vehicles and became confrontational with police officers. After about 25 minutes of this, 15 to 20 police officers on horseback charged and forced these youths to run down Kensington High Street past the station. I do not know where it ended or how. [OM, 29 December 2009].

11. After the police brutality last night, we were expecting more of the same tonight. Interestingly, it did not quite happen – orders from above, after the politicians must have seen the shocking footage from

last night, meant that they have not tried the same tactics, and they were right not to: many more people have come, with hundreds of young children and babies. Any police assault would have ended with deaths and numerous injuries. But it was even more interesting than that. On this evening, the police chose not to block all traffic, like they did yesterday, but to block only on one side on the road, allowing the traffic to separate the demo from Palace Green. In order to limit movement, they have incarcerated some 2500 people into a tiny area surrounded by metal barriers, and one could hardly move at all, creating much consternation and additional anger. After last night, the anger was not just about the brutalities of Israel in Gaza, but also about the supine acquiescence of the UK in the massacre, by joining the US in allowing the Israelis to do what they will, as they did during the destruction of South Lebanon in Summer 2006. The brutality used last night to disperse the demonstrators, was obviously read as an icon of this behaviour.

After some 30 minutes of spending time in this corralled area, treated by the police as so much cattle, and anger rising from all, some taunts by the police manning the barriers led to an amazing feat – the whole file of the demonstrators at the front started dragging and pushing the barriers towards Palace Green and embassy road gate, pushing the policemen into that enclave. All hell broke loose, and for some long moments it felt that the events of last night may be repeated, with a vengeance. It seems that someone high up at the Met was more responsible tonight – after the police have retreated to the safe area behind the iron gates of Palace Green, joining the many hundreds which were already there, presumably to protect the Israeli embassy from some tank divisions, the demonstrators were now in control of the road, and traffic came to a halt, with cars and buses stuck in the middle of the road; there was nowhere for them to go, but to turn back. The police have abandoned the road to the protestors, a rare sight, bearing witness to the strength of emotions of the protestors, and police recognition of it. The demonstration was full of hundreds of parents with young children, none of them less angry than the rest of us; the police had decided to avoid conflict for the time being, but hundreds more of the riot squad arrived and placed themselves at the periphery, ready to pounce on [sic] the demonstrators. For the following two and a half hours, the protestors controlled the road and the police were lying back, having experimented with removal of the demo and failed. It was quite a sight – the large forces of the riot police hidden behind the gates of Palace Green, bidding [sic] their time, and having to deal with a virtual rain of footwear going their way; many demonstrators have decided on homage to the Iraqi journalist who threw [sic] the shoe [sic] at Bush, and directed their shoes at the police as a pointed reminder of what they think of the British position towards this unfolding tragedy. Only by 19:00 has the demo started to disperse, at which point the police moved in like a large commando group, pouncing on youngsters which they have marked for arrest. They have failed twice to make any arrests as the whole crowd was struggling against them, and had to retreat again. Unfortunately, after many of the demo has dispersed, they have managed [sic] to arrest eight demonstrators [sic] for what they called ‘public order offences’, as usual. All in all, this was a most successful day of action, in which the whole of Central London was affected by the demo, and there could be no doubt that the message is being transmitted loud and clear. Let us hope that someone tell Gordon and David, the two great supporters of Israeli war crimes. [Haim Bresheeth, 29 December 2009. Available from <http://gaza.haimbresheeth.com/gaza-carnage-archive/london-demos/london-demo-29-december>].

12. I arrived about 15 mins late for this one by which time, Kensington Palace Green - the road that runs past the Israeli embassy - was completely closed off. The cops had also closed West-bound traffic on Ken. High St and I'd just overheard a senior cop saying they were about to close East-bound traffic too. Before the cops were able to put this plan into action though the protesters who until then had been sheep penned on the opposite side of the high St suddenly pushed through the crush barriers and opened the High St for everyone to surge into. There seemed to be some doubt as to what to do next as the first ones through

the barriers were not immediately joined by many protesters from behind. Maybe they feared the reaction of the cops as I'd heard that they had been particularly brutish the day before. However over the course of just a few minutes, the crowd became emboldened and bit by bit pushed the cops across the high St until they were hemmed in against the closed high gates to Kensington Palace Green. I thought the cops would react very badly to being pushed into a confined space like this but in fact they had performed a controlled retreat and endured the situation for over an hour while the crowd were incessantly chanting "Free free Palestine!". I was right in the thick of the tremendous crush near to the front for most of the time which felt like being in a very dense wood where the trees are all waving placards. It was near impossible to move in any direction for a long time which is why the pics I took aren't up to much. At one stage, George Galloway was hoisted onto peoples' shoulders and addressed the crowd with a megaphone. Several of the more animated men wearing Palestinian flags stood up on the jumble of barriers immediately in front of the line of cops (fifth pic). They were in quite a precarious position doing this as if either the cops or the protesters had surged forwards they would likely have toppled over and been trampled so maybe unwittingly, by standing on the barriers in this way they had somewhat stabilised the long stand off.

Later, after I had escaped from the centre stage crush, several of the front line cops had their caps snatched which were shortly afterwards demonstrated to be quite flammable amongst the crowd. Always worth knowing I suppose. During the time that I was there, I didn't see the cops doing anything outrageously bad though I couldn't be looking everywhere at once of course. Also I didn't notice any in riot gear though there could have been hundreds dressed and waiting in wagons in the surrounding streets. Maybe they'd realised they had acted too brutally the day before though it can be rare for the cops to learn anything positive.

On the news when I returned home, the regime of psychopaths that run Israel had today been continuing their cowardly, brutal and wholly disproportionate attacks on Palestinian civilians and militants alike. Lines of American supplied tanks were shown amassing along the border ready for a ground invasion. While Israel continues to commit war crimes and internationally illegal collective punishment with impunity in this way, I would urge everyone to get over to the embassy and protest every day. It's fairly abhorrent that we tolerate having an Israeli embassy at all. Any other country acting in this manner might expect to have diplomatic ties severed and their embassy closed but Israel, as always is a special case. Today the protest of about 1000 people appeared to be made up of about 90% Middle Eastern origin people and only about 10% traditional British looking people. I know many of you who read Indymedia are still on holiday until after the new year so there really is little excuse not to go there. And don't be put off by the cold weather either, you stay as warm as toast in crowds that dense! [kriptick, 29 December 2009. Available from <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2008/12/416382.html>].

13. Demo turned out to be quite exciting in the end. Basically me and [B] turn up and there's about 8 or 9 ppl there. So me and [B] are like "sod this we're leaving in half an hour". So we stand around, the only Muslims there apart from a couple of other sisters.....[FA] etc...all the rest were hippies. There was hardly any police either, just 2 officers guarding the entrance to the building. Me and [B] were like...hippies are crap, we need some roudy [*sic*] brother to make a demo feel like a demo cuz [*sic*] everyone was just stood around quietly [*sic*] holding placards. Naturally me and [B] found it too civilised for our liking. Anyway like I said there were a hand full of ppl [*sic*], there were about 0 and they strated [*sic*] chanting. All of a sudden the hippies kicked off, shouting and being a nuisance bur [*sic*] generally peaceful. More ppl were gathering so the group had turned into roughly 80-100 max but the police were strating [*sic*] to panic. They called back up so a whole load of vans full of police turned up, blocked off the roads, helicopters over head – the usual. They strated [*sic*] pushing ppl [*sic*] back. Dragging them

out and arresting them, trying to get the demo to move to the otherside [sic] of the road and the hippies were having none of it so they just sat down. Anyway you know the police don't like it when you sit down so they strted [sic] getting heavy, I quickly darted out of the way and [B] the muppet just stood there trying to figure out what was going on. Luckily nothing happened cuz [sic] the police cudnt [sic] really do anything. The crowds weren't big enough for them to do their usual surrounding and squashing and they hippies weren't rowdy enough for them to drag ppl [sic] off to arrest them. They were just sat on the floor chanting. Mosad [sic] agents in plain clothing everywhere, telling the police what to do and police were acting like lap-dogs. [N, 29 December 2009, Counter Demo of Geva Rapp's appearance at a Jewish Student Union event].

14. After listening to the speeches in Trafalgar square, there was a call for everyone to march to the Israeli embassy (unplanned) so everyone started making there [sic] way to the embassy. We made our way slowly, then near the hyde park underpass, the police stood in front and cut us off from the rest of the demonstration. It was like a 'domino effect' – people were stopped from going to [the] embassy. The crowd were becoming restless as the riot police remained there pushing people back. One officer stepped forward and asked for calm and claimed that they would be taking us [through] a new route for our own protection as it was getting too crowded overhead. The officer in charge put his hand up and promised he would get us to the embassy safely. Thinking this a reasonable compromise, a crowd followed the officers into the underpass, with many others shouting at us not to trust the police. I followed the crowd into the underpass, with my young girls youth group, [and] my 12 year old son. I noticed that the group that was stopped by the police included women, children, old people and disabled, as well as many 'bearded brothers'. I was in the second row directly in front of the police. Half way into the tunnel, the police stopped and turned around facing the demonstrators. This sudden stop caused people to barge into each other...behind the police a riot gear emerged. The riot police came in front and there were some scuffles with those in [the] front row...a 20 year old man was grabbed by the riot police and taken into a nearby van – he came out with scratches around his eyes and claimed they had pulled his hair and poked him in the eyes.

Riot police charged into the crowd twice. [The] First time people were caught unawares and ran back, hurting themselves and running over people who had fallen. Even non-Muslims said they were feeling really threatened by the police. A thin layer of gas was visible over the crowd, and people were complaining of dizziness and some were also physically sick. The crowd regrouped and went on towards the police, but this time more cautiously, although they were still chanting. My twelve year old son who was in the front row, was hit on the head by a baton...since then he has been too scared to go to any of the demos. My son wanted to get out but was trapped by police on the other side of the underpass, with one officer stating, 'stay there...you went in there with them, you stay in there with them'...this lead to many jumping over the railings into hyde park to escape...terrified. My son called me and kept on asking her where I was, everyone seemed disorientated because of the gas and the dizziness. Those who continued were beaten up...I saw one man who was beaten on the head right in front of me and had to be taken away...presumably to hospital. Everyone was traumatised by this and was shocked that [the] police were so conniving and calculating in that they ensured that there were no press or camera crews down there to record. [UY, 3 January 2009].

15. I myself was hit on the head by riot police in the underpass despite not acting violently in any way. When I eventua;lly [sic] got out of the tunnell [sic] (the police refused me permission to leave immediately due to the blood gushing from my head. I went to hospital and now have 5 stitches in my head. [Joe, 3 January 2009].

16. On the 3rd of January 2009, after the heart-warming and triumphant gathering of tens of thousands who support the cause of the Palestinian people in Trafalgar square, London, most protestors then made their way to the Israeli Embassy to make their voices heard as they had done for the last 6 days. Protestors of all races and creeds, men [sic], women and children chanted and held banners and signs condemning the Israeli government for their [sic] inhumane bombardment of Gaza. I was there.

We walked singing choruses in English and Arabic waving our Palestinian flags and holding up our signs. Peacefully. When we arrived at Green Park, we were stopped. There was no reason for us to be stopped. I was at the front and asked one of the police officers why we had been halted, to which he replied that we would be permitted to proceed eventually. While we waited, the sheer number of police officers arriving was frightening. All of them were in riot gear and most had balaclavas underneath their helmets. There must have been 500-1000 officers in sight while we were waiting to be let through.

After approximately 20 minutes of uncertainty, we were informed that we could go through the Hyde Park underpass. With haste, and eagerness, we climbed over gates (most walked around) to get to the tunnel. We were split into two groups once in the underpass and the noise was deafening. The chants and choruses became louder and people were greeting each-other. The police who had formed five lines in front of us, two lines directly in front of us in black riot gear and three lines in riot gear and high-visibility coats behind them, made us stop on numerous occasion[s] for minutes each time. Whenever this happened, we would chant and boo. Nothing else.

When we were in sight of the light at the end of the tunnel, we were once again stopped. This time for many minutes, which the crowd responded with demands of why, but still, no violence or pushing. One of the officers then shouted a command. The first two rows of riot police then attacked anyone in sight of them with their riot batons, often surrounding individuals and beating them to the ground [ground]. The crowd tried to run backwards in fear but as the rows behind were oblivious to what was going on, people fell on each other and many people were crushed by the bodies of their fellow protestors falling on them. The police continued to brutally, mercilessly and ruthlessly attack people with such viciousness that many people around me were leaking blood from their head. I saw several people unconscious and many people were clutching parts of their body in pain, likely to be a fracture from the sheer force of the attacks by the Metropolitan Police. I stress that there were women, children and babies in prams in this crowd. Furthermore, everyone was innocent and part of a very peaceful protest. There are many things that cannot be explained using the English language and the sheer violence I saw from the POLICE and the fear I felt cannot be expressed in language. It was horrific, I was sure that I would be hit on the head by officers and fall unconscious. If that would have happened, it would not have been the end of it as officers often continued to beat people who were on the ground with their batons of [sic] kicking them.

When the unprovoked attack was finally over, the injured were helped on to their feet and in anger many people threw bits of wood at the ranks of evil police in front of them. I was furious. I was possessed by a rage, which I have rarely felt in my life as I saw a woman, who looked over 60 years old, being helped up by other victims. The aftermath of the attack left debris of shoes, scarves, signs, blood and bags in between the wide no-mans-land which separated us, the innocent protestors and the riot police, who had attacked us viciously in an unprovoked attack.

After maybe 10 minutes of panic and fear of another charge, the police started to walk backwards, meaning that we could continue walking forwards and into the open air. We proceeded with caution, this time I was in the first few rows, instead of being right at the front. We walked for maybe to [sic] minutes when we stopped yet again and without warning the police in front of us repeated the horrors of which

took place but fifteen minutes before. The same unexplainable attack on innocent people occurred [*sic*]. The police force was as merciless and ruthless with their attacks as before. Hitting any life form in sight with their riot batons, this time, there was no crushing and piles of innocent people lying on top of each other as the crowd were [*sic*] cautious after the first attack. This attack was just as vicious and lasted just as long as the attack minutes prior to this one. As with this attack, men, women and children were beaten senseless and the police were indiscriminate with whom they hit as all were innocents.

After the second attack, the police quickly retreated and left a huge gap between the protestors and attackers and we eventually plucked up the courage to walk forward, into the open air. We saw people up on the railings with cameras and wigs [*sic*] clapping and cheering as we exited the tunnel. The ordeal was over and chants of “Allah hu Akhbar” were roared as I screamed “TAKBIR” until my vocal cords felt like they were on fire. We were out in the open and were free from the totalitarian police force who had taken us into an underpass where there were no other witnesses and no live news feed or reporters. We had been lured into an ambush that we would never forget. We were treated as Palestinians were everyday in Israel by the, so called civilised police force of London and this made me feel more in touch with my Palestinian akhi’s as I had ever felt.

I have a message to the Metropolitan Police who were involved in this despicable act upon innocent peaceful protestors: you may beat us mortals into submission, but your arms are too short to box with God. [X, 3 January 2009].

17. After the rally in Trafalgar square, we began making our way towards the Israeli embassy. The police let half through then barricaded the rest of the demonstrators. Eventually we were allowed to follow and made our way towards the embassy; however we were again stopped by the police near the Hyde park Underpass. The police then guided a group of us into the underpass. I was with my sister and her baby, who was in a pushchair. We were in the last few rows and made our way into the tunnel and suddenly were blocked off by a line of officers in front. We realised there were officers who had come in behind us and had blocked us off in both directions. The women around me started panicking (the group under the tunnel consisted of women, children, elderly and young men) and children started to crying [*sic*]. One woman managed to run out towards us shouting that police were hitting people near the front. I asked the police why they were doing this, one officer replied ‘it’s not us- we have orders’. There was sickly smell inside, but I assumed it was the smell from the tunnel itself, it wasn’t until later that I heard people had been feeling sick and dizzy due to the smell. Panicking, we managed to get out with the pushchair and managed to find another way to the embassy.

General observation: At the end of protests and demonstrations, the police turn up in riot gear, pushing and shoving protesters, which obviously just antagonises and angers the crowd. On one occasion, the police separated me from my 14 year old son. Instead of letting me through, they made me walk all the way around the back streets to get him. I noticed that some protesters who were visibly non-Muslim were allowed to pass through the barriers, where as [*sic*] I was refused and threatened with arrest if I continued to ask them.

When we finally reached the embassy....this anger was clearly reverberating around the crowd. Word spread about ‘what happened under the tunnel’ and when the crowd reached the embassy they were ‘very upset’ and thus I can understand why things got out of hand at the embassy. [Layla, 3 January 2009].

18. On Saturday at the national demonstration it was followed by another demo towards the Israeli embassy. We decided to join in and stay for the second demo. We were on foot and as we were walking

I noticed a heavy police presence. This was also building up. The first lot of people had already set off.

Eventually we were blocked and as we went to the front after asking the Police why we are waiting they said they are clearing the underpass so we can enter and carry on with the demo from there. We never had any choice as we couldn't do anything else but wait. I failed to see why we had to wait as we could have happily joined on with the rest of the protestors. As you can imagine frustration was growing.

We waited about 20-30 minutes before they let us go. They guided us into the underpass. Then after going down the underpass I noticed the police were in front of the rally facing us with shields and pushing the crowd back. This was obviously provoking the crowd and there was no reason for them to do this. When we got to the middle of the underpass the police started to attack us with their batons or something similar. The riot police were wearing helmets and had face protection. They were hitting us for no reason whatsoever. Nobody had provoked them.

There was chaos, people started to run backwards. With women and children present there were people screaming and they were scared. The protestors, who were from different backgrounds and organisations, never knew what to do. Some people were hit on the hand, backs and some on their heads. I was shocked that the police had acted this way. In the confusion I was pushed from side to side. I have never ever seen the police charge the people like they had done, especially innocent ones who were defenceless. They used way too much force and in my opinion provoked the whole situation.

Eventually when this calmed down the protest started to move forward and for a 2nd time they started to attack. Again as the police stopped and protest moved forward for a third time the police started to hit the protestors.

When we got to the other side we saw protestors and finally took a sigh of relief [*sic*] that we were safe.

My friend was hit in the head and was bleeding heavily. We took him [*sic*] to hospital and he had stitches.

Overall I must stress that the police had frightened the protestors to such an extent that they never knew what to do or where to go. We were demonstrators not rioters. Why did they lead us into the underpass, was it pre-planned? Because I certainly think it was. Secondly the police pushing us back and then turning on us was shocking beyond belief. We were trapped with women and children they did not set a good example, instead they put fear in us. The time we were in there I thought we were all going to get hurt, initially by the police and if not by them then by the panic of the people. I cannot stress to the full extent the fear that had been created by the police, the atmosphere of being lost and having nowhere to go.

Luckily I learnt George Galloway was there otherwise who would believe [*sic*]. There was no "clash" as it was purely one sided and instead it would be fair to say the police clashed into the protestors. [WK, 3 January 2009].

19. There were several incidents which I myself [*sic*] were [*sic*] involved in:

Officer Qk 828 would not respond to a simple question of why he pushed me when I was near a barrier in an open space with no one around just me a friend 3 other police officers, when questioned again his response was "Piss off!". When I asked for an apology he responded by telling me to get lost. His superior's [*sic*] number is QK 89.

When confronting officers about the time of the “opposition” march ending I was told to “F*** off”.

After seeing one officer attack a protestor, noticing his badge wasn't showing I calmly asked for his badge to be shown, as its a legal much [sic] for it to be shown he refused to answer me and a group of officers came and were exceptionally hostile and said we were breaching the peace and would be arrested.

I [sic] common theme would be to antagonise the protesters by pushing them into barriers and of course in a congested area people at the back were being crushed therefore pushed back against other protesters, which ultimately lead to the police being pushed and they used this as a sign of aggression.

When I asked where we should go when the police were pushing us, with a car and mental [sic] railings clearly visible he shrugged his shoulders. [HG, 3 January 2009].

20. After a week of brutal and disproportionate violence by the Israeli government against the Palestinians, we joined thousands of others gathered at London Embankment to march for peace and justice.

It was a brilliant display of solidarity with the Palestinians, but the provocative behaviour of riot police in panic mode escalated an otherwise peaceful demonstration. We are ordinary citizens, who were marching for peace, but who were terrified by series of batoned [sic] charges in the Hyde Park Underpass. Conveniently, it meant the police violence went unseen and unrecorded by the TV camera crews, so this is our account for those who weren't there

The march was lively and good natured, a diverse mix of Muslims, Jews, young, old, women, men, children and families. We honoured the George Bush shoethrower [sic] by chucking some old shoes outside Downing Street as part of the organised photocall [sic], and struggled to fit into Trafalgar Square which was filled with protesters listening to the speakers.

We cheered when we were told it was the biggest turnout of Palestinian solidarity, and booed our own leaders for lacking the political will to resolve this destructive conflict which has blighted the lives of so many innocents, Arab and Jew alike.

The organisers announced they would be marching to the Israeli Embassy at the end of the rally, so as it was finishing up my husband and I made our way to the west side of the square so we could join them. We all waited until well after the rally, but the people in front were getting impatient and jostling so the police let them set off. We followed close behind, everyone buoyed up by the big turnout and chanting , “free, free Palestine”, with more vigour than before.

As we approached the end of Piccadilly, with thousands of marchers streamed behind us, the familiar uniforms of the Met Police had changed to the blue helmets and thick plastic shields of riot police.

We were held at the top of the underpass for several minutes and the crowd was growing restless as it was getting darker. We saw a photographer or protestor being pushed from the railing to the ground by one of the riot police, an ill tempered exchange followed and some pushing and shoving, and an experienced marcher tried to calm the situation down, which succeeded. We noticed the MP George Galloway had found his way to the front.

The atmosphere was still lively, friendly and peaceful despite the minor incident and the amassing of more riot police. We didn't think much of it at the time, we had been on plenty of Stop the War demos which had all passed off peacefully.

Eventually we were allowed to continue, down the slope to the underpass. We were held back a couple of times but this was normal to let marchers catch up. The atmosphere was great. We moved nearer to the front, perhaps ten back, amongst us were children and women and older people, predominantly Muslim. We didn't see any missiles or aggression from the protesters.

The next thing we knew was that a hail of batons came over the top and our bodies were being pushed backwards and people were screaming, the police were charging us. We threw ourselves to the sides and put our hands over our heads. The charge had stopped, and we checked around us to see whether people were ok. Some young Muslim women next to us were crying and clearly petrified.

And then it came again, charging towards us, then stopped. My heart was thumping, I thought there was no way we could go forward or back, I was terrified of being hit or crushed or trampled on. Everyone tried to sit down so we could show the police we were non-aggressive, but that didn't work. It was total panic.

The police must have charged again, because we were then on the other side of their line, so we grabbed the hands of the women we were next to to make a run out the front of a tunnel. A protester was lying still, face down on the ground in front of us. We tried to leave but someone said we were safer where we were.

Eventually we managed to retreat backwards and we realised they had stopped the march behind us so that there was only about 100 of us down there. We were then released so we progressed out of the underpass towards Kensington, by now cut off from the main march and ringed as a group by riot police.

There were injuries, but mostly we were shocked, we had done nothing wrong, illegal or provocative. We came to the conclusion we had been taken down the underpass deliberately because the police panicked. They wanted to frighten us, but it just turned an otherwise peaceful protest into a hostile and volatile situation.

When we got to the Israeli Embassy most of the main march had dispersed, it was dark and the atmosphere was angry. We felt so frustrated that no media would have seen the violence of the police, but would see the culmination of hostilities at the Embassy, that we rang some of the news media to tell them. The Met had a statement ready: , "one charge" they said, using , "proportionate" tactics, which was not our experience.

We didn't know then that as we demonstrated, the Israeli government was preparing its troops for a land invasion, where undoubtedly many more civilians will die and the prospect of peace looks further out of reach. We will keep coming back, with many thousands of others too, and standing up for peace and justice for Palestine. [Claire Ainsley, 3 January 2009. Available from http://globaldayofaction.org/stopwar/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=871&Itemid=144].

21. My wife went to the demo along with my son and a couple of his friends. After the demo, we went to the Israeli embassy, where the police cornered us after things were getting out of hand. My 18 year old son was arrested- accused of throwing a bottle at police- apparently he had been picked up on CCTV- they put him in a van, alongside a school friend and kept [him] there for hours. He was then taken to a police station, where he was kept until the early hours of the morning. He was released with an order to come back in march. He denies that he threw anything at the police. It had impacted him psychologically- he has never been in trouble with the law, [he] was only there to support Gaza. [K, 3 January 2009].

22. I was at the London demo. The police allowed people into the tunnel and attacked in the most brutal manner. The police were criminal in their behaviour and although people were injured the situation could have been very serious. There were women with pushchairs in the tunnel. The Police were smirking as we came back out of the tunnel.

I am going to write to the Police Chief and ask for an explanation. I urge others to do the same.

A note for future march the crowd should stay closely together. Never be cornered by the police and pushed into tunnels.

The police were stupid as in future demos some of the youth will be ready for them.

I hope the police get everything they deserve. [Protestor, 3 January 2009].

23. At the relevant time, police wanted to disperse the counter demonstrators. However, we refused to leave at least until the pro-Israelis were dispersed in like fashion. Suddenly, in response, the police used force, using their batons to beat the crowd. Members of the crowd were mainly women and children with a minority of men. In an act of civil disobedience, we sat down unmoved. The police started kicking us. I was manhandled by 4 or 5 police officers who threw me onto the pavement. I was kicked repeatedly by officers on my lower body and legs. I got up and sat with the protestors a number of times and suffered verbal and physical attacks as a result. On the 3rd occasion I said ‘arrest me, I won’t move’. By the 4th occasion I was left alone and others were dispersed. I suffered bruises and other visible marks. I saw other protestors who were beaten, mistreated and injured. One man was bleeding as a result. [S, 7 January 2009].

24. Protest outside the assembly was quite peaceful. The police then commenced to surround the pro-Palestine rally and charged through the middle, running into the crowd with punching fists, hitting anybody who were [*sic*] unfortunate to be in their path including women. Many were falling onto the ground and hurting themselves in the process. The[y] then divided the pro-Palestinian rally into two. The police were very violent, shouting obscenities, pushing and shoving the protestors. In the end, protestors were being pushed between the officers, with one officer pushing us to one side, not realising that there was another line of officers pushing us from the other side.

25. Today, [Wed 7th Jan], there was a bit of trouble at the counter-protest outside the Embassy (to the Nuremburg (pro-Israel) rally). At one point, I decided to get away. The police were walking behind me and for no reason, 2 or 3 of them started shoving me. It clearly didn’t bother them that I could have fallen over and been trampled on. I can’t remember if I tried to take a photo of them, but one of them later assaulted me.

I had left my banner behind and so decided to hang around a bit to see if I could find it. For my own safety, I sat at the bus stop with another lady. Then, some policemen walked by, one of whom recognised me. He said, 'You were at the demonstration!' (as if demonstrators aren't allowed to sit at bus stops), yanked me out of my seat and started to push me! I don't know what he was trying to do to me but he had no right to do that – and he was a big chap. Thankfully, a group of Muslims saw this and bundled over [to] me to protect me from him. 2 other officers pulled him away. I then jumped up, ran towards him and took a photo. It may not have come out properly but he was one of the few black men there so I would probably recognise him. Thankfully, someone took his number (3407) so I will go to police complaints, and get legal advice. I intend to press charges for common assault. Pity I don't have the details of the others but I can probably put in a general complaint. [Debbie, 7 January 2009].

26. I was disgusted to see the unprovoked attacks that the police subjected on the majority of the demonstrators, although there were certain individuals who obviously cared nothing for Palestine and where [*sic*] there for trouble, the police made no effort to separate the peaceful democratic demonstrators from the hooligans.

Firstly the police being equipped in full scale riot gear was intimidating enough, around the world protestors with the same amount of peaceful protestors where [*sic*] met by normal uniformed police officers who where [*sic*] very sympathetic and kind towards the crowds[.] [W]hat was displayed by these police officers was brutal, unjust and cold making sarcastic remarks such as are you guys cold, just go home your [*sic*] not going to liberate Palestine with your protests!!

The 2nd grave concern I had was [with] the fact that the aggressive police officers stood out and they where [*sic*] the ones flaming up the crowds into anger [.] And funnily enough they did not wear any shoulder numbers as if to say we will do what we want and get away with it [.] despite me telling them a number of times to put them on display as well as telling a sergeant. But on all occasions I was met by a smug smile and they simply shrugged it off with no care.

3rd point to make was the actual level of force used on us [.] [W]hilst standing in that crowd all I remember was me standing protesting peacefully un armed all I hear is a shout get back[;] being confused and turning around to see who this command was aimed at, I was met by a huge blow by one of the police shields that sent me flying back [.] [I]f that was not enough they charged forward and all I can see was the level 2 public order batons raining down on us whilst a lot of us had tripped over each other in panic.

I took a look at my sweater only to find it covered in blood [;] I panicked thinking I had been injured but looking to the side I saw another fellow demonstrator with blood gushing from his head. [A]gain the police continued there [*sic*] blows despite him pleading to them "what have I done, I am just a peaceful protestor, blood is all over me yet you continue to beat me", they took no notice and another blow was given by there [*sic*] shields, *he* was given no medical attention and rather just left to bleed.

I do appreciate the violent individuals in the demonstrations who clashed with police where [*sic*] in the wrong...but how could you explain or even justify the other sections...that where [*sic*] totally peaceful and purposely separated themselves from the middle where the violence was taken place...being randomly bashed and beaten with riot batons[.] [D]o they think our woman and children or our men are not made out of flesh, we are humans too and we are proud to be British so what was our crime? I tried so much to reason with the police telling them you can obviously see this side of the demonstration is peaceful and we are complying with your every command...but no change, nothing!

I will not generalise every police officer present as being a part of the unjust and unlawful force used on us in that demonstration [,] as I remember individual police officers where [*sic*] saddened by what had happened and the display put on by there [*sic*] colleagues and openly discussed there [*sic*] feelings with me[.] [T]his gave me this little feeling of warmth and there was still some hope, not every person is ignorant some do understand and support our cause, some do shed a tear for every innocent civilian blood that is dropped by the onslaught of the might of the Israeli army. [Carzim, 10 January 2009].

27. I was standing right next to the barriers on the opposite side of the Israeli embassy. The crowd was closed in and the police had pushed people in, making it difficult to move. My cousin [M] (22) and I were being pushed against the barriers, and when I made to jump over them, the police stopped me. I kept on telling them I was getting squashed and I needed to get out, but they wouldn't listen. At one point, some people around us pushed hard against the barriers and I was able to get out. My cousin had got her leg trapped in between two barriers and couldn't move. I tried to help her get her leg free, but one of the policemen hit me on the back of my neck with a baton and I had to run away. They were all wearing visors so I was unable to identify them. Eventually my cousin got out, but she was unable to walk and I had to carry her around the corner. I called for an ambulance three times, but was told they were not making calls within the 'riot' area. An ambulance finally managed to make it, and we went to the hospital, where my cousin was told she had torn her ligament. [Samia, 10 January 2009].

28. I joined the mass demonstration and remained outside the embassy. Scuffles broke out with the riot police pushing and trapping a couple of hundred protestors within the vicinity. (this happened after Starbucks had its windows smashed with a barrier). They kept protestors cordoned off for approximately 2-3 hours in freezing temperatures, taking ten or so people out at a time to be searched, photographed and questioned. I was taken and my details were noted as well as my photograph. I was then searched 'intimately' by two male officers...although I repeatedly asked for a female officer. In the distance I saw a Muslim sister being pinned down by a male officer but searched by female officer. I repeatedly told them that I could empty my pockets out for them, but they told me that it was not necessary and continued to search me. At one point I asked if I could call my friend (white male), who I had come with to tell him to wait for me and why I was being delayed. The officers said I was not allowed to make that phone call. I was asked where I was from, and when I replied 'I am British', the officer replied, 'Yes madam, we know you are British, but ethnically where are you from?' to which I answered I was Pakistani. I was then told that I would be charged for 'breach of peace', although I had not been involved in anything other than protesting. I was then warned to stay away from future demonstrations to which I replied 'I will not stay away it is my right'. After they released me, I met up with my friend and asked if he had been searched and to my surprise, he informed me that they had only asked his name and date of birth and then asked if it had been a 'happy day'. [Atrat, 10 January 2009].

29. Thousands, possibly hundreds of thousands, met in Hyde Park in the bitterly cold morning of Jan 10th. Cold and good humoured, spirits were high and so was the strength of feelin [*sic*] about the ongoing massacre of the people of Gaza.

At around 2pm the demo moved at pace through Hyde Park. The crowd was a very diverse lot including young and old and people of all races. There was a vibrant party atmosphere with people changing loudly. Young children marched proudly with their placards [*sic*] held high to the sound of the samba drums up ahead.

After not too long we came across what was believed to be the back gate to the Israeli Embassy. A crowd gathered and some people were sitting on top of the fence and gate. The crowd were happy and angry.

A loud cheer erupted as a US flag was set alight. Anger at the US's [sic] continued political [sic] and military support for Israel has never been stronger as the US ambassador to the UN abstained from voting on the ceasefire resolution.

At around 3pm there were 2 loud bangs from behind the gate. There was some panic and confusion in the crowd as most were unsure [about] what was happening. The crowd was pushed back by police and there was smoke coming from behind the embassy gates. People were confused as to whether it was tear gas or not. Chants of 'Shame on You' rang out from the front. The majority of the crowd were milling around in confusion. Some were passing by slowly to continue the march. The police pushed the crowd back again causing more panic. There was more smoke which many believed could have been tear gas. There was little police or steward presence where we were, near the back of the crowd. One small group of stewards, obviously also confused as to what was going on, left the area, claiming that the crowd was at the gates of the Russian Embassy! The crowd was pushed back several more times and there were several more loud bangs. Possibly the sound of fireworks going off. Just before we located our lost friends and moved off, along with others separated from friends, the whole crowd was engulfed in smoke that stung the throat- definitely some form of police crowd dispersal. Booing rang out from those trying to escape the gas in panic.

We moved on.

The walk from this gate to the front of the Embassy on Kensington High Street was fast moving with noticeably low police and steward presence. We shared stories of what we had just seen to try to make sense of it and to put all this in the context of what was happening in Gaza, where around 800 people were killed in the last two weeks.

As we walked, we passed a Starbucks with a cracked window. Some shouted 'Shame on You' as they went. The owner of Starbucks, Howard Shultz, is known to be an active supporter of the Zionist cause. Reportedly honoured for his work in building close relations between Israel and the US.

We turned the corner on to Kensington High Street at around quarter to 4. The crowd was very slow moving, tightly packed, friendly and waiting patiently to move towards the embassy. Drums played, chants rang out and as we got closer to the gate. I could see at least one person on top of it waving the Palestinian flag high. As we slowly progressed down the road, more and more people climbed on the gates of the Embassy and the barriers in front of it. The mass of the crowd were good humoured, chanting loudly and feeling a little squashed. Some were moving past to get to the officially organised rally in the park the other side of the embassy but all movement was very slow. Some fire works were let off and there was some smoke coming from behind the embassy gates.

At around quarter to 5 more officers with cameras appeared on the balcony to the left of the embassy gates. Shortly after, mass panic broke out as police pushed the crowd, causing those already densely [sic] packed to be crushed. People all over were crying out in pain and desperation. It became very difficult to breathe. Some became hysterical with panic. There was no way out. The crowd around me started to shout 'Back Off' in desperation. I soon realised that if I carried on shouting I would have passed out. There was no air. Riot police stood behind the barrier on the pavement doing nothing. Suddenly the barriers at the edge of the road gave way. People tripped and fell. It became apparent that people were trapped under the barriers. The Guardian reported that masked youths pushed over protest barriers whilst mentioning nothing of this highly dangerous police tactic in which many were injured. The crowd became very distressed, confused and angry-unsurprisingly [sic]. I saw two police carrying away at least 1 injured protester.

The police cleared the section of Kensington High Street directly in front of the embassy, splitting the demonstration in 3. We, as part of a group of several hundred were pushed aggressively down narrow [sic] Kensington Court. The crowd were [sic] not moving willingly. Many concerned about friends they had been separated [sic] from, what had happened to those trapped under the barrier and those in the other sections of the demonstration. We could hear the thud of others being beaten back with shields and truncheons as we too were treated to the same. I could hear the sound of thuds and cracks as people were forcibl[y] shoved backwards on to shop windows. There was a group of teenage girls huddled in the corner very frightened and trapped. People at the back of the group reported that the end of the passageway was partially blocked with police vans. People panicked [sic] at the thought of there being no way out of this tiny dimly lit road. The crowd moved back slowly with some scuffles at the front.

By ten past 5 we had been pushed to the end of the road and squeezed through the police vans. The line of riot police had stopped pushing forward but were holding their line. Dazed and shocked people hung around behind the police vans. Some were in obvious distress. People were calling out to try to find others lost in the crush. We talked together. Many had seen injuries; people crushed including a report of an elderly man. There was no police medical assistance where we were and people were calling out for help from any medics in the crowd, whilst the line of riot police stood and watched. The mass moved off.

We moved round the back streets and rejoined the march at the end which had already passed the embassy. Riot police were pushing the crowd back here too. Not long after we arrived the crowd panicked and ran as the police ran forward with battons [sic] raised.

The crowd were understandably panicked and angry. Some began moving barriers into the road between themselves and the police line. There were several hundred people milling around. The mood was one of confusion and it seemed to me that a lot of people were staying out of concern for others in the crowd-whether they knew them or not.

At 5.30 3 riot vans arrived at the rear of the crowd. Police got out and walked towards the embassy. Not long afterwards the vans drove at speed towards the makeshift barricades. The crowd panicked and many ran round the corner but people did not disperse in large numbers. There were a number of local people who lived in the area seemingly going about their daily business, passing through the crowd with no trouble. There were several panicked rushes but the crowd didn't disperse. I could hear the sound of barriers being moved.

As we stood just down the side road, a group of teenage girls struggled their way out of the crowd, carrying their injured friend. They were obviously distressed, angry at police actions and resolute. There was a stand off between the police and protesters before police pushed the crowd back down the High Street, away from the embassy.

At around quarter past 7 we received a call from a friend who was still being detained in a massive group that could have numbered into the thousands, outside the front of the embassy. Police had let women and children leave but were holding all of the men, only letting them out one by one after they each gave their details.

At quarter to 8 we saw a series of men been escorted one by one out of a police cordon and away from the embassy. 2 officers per person.

At 8, it was difficult to see how many were still being detained as police were not allowing anyone near those being detained, but from where we were I would say there were several hundred. I don't know how long they were held there for.

This is my eye-witness account of how events unfolded throughout the day- a completely different picture to that being shown in the mainstream media. The strength of people's anger is understandable in light of the continuing massacre in Gaza and intensified by the violent and dangerous actions of the police. [Sally Hicks, 10 January 2009. Available from <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2009/01/417998.html>].

30. The first confrontations took place outside the entrance to Kensington Palace Gardens (or the Russian [sic] embassy depending on who you ask - I won't claim to know the geography of the area well enough to say), the police failed to disperse people despite [sic] charges and attacking those sitting down with batons. The confrontation eventually subsided with the majority of people continuing past, this after shouting by the SWC stewards, and some others shouting that help was needed at the front of the embassy.

Other than that the march was so far peaceful, until a little later outside the embassy. At this point people were moving slowly and at a near stand still due to the bottle neck created by police lines and security barricades.

Then, with confrontations between protesters and the police lines in front of the embassy, the police decided to escalate matters by charging forward pushing the protesters back. However due to the huge crush of people this meant the whole crowd got shoved back with people crashing into and falling over/knocking over the barriers on the opposite side of the street to the embassy. Since most of those affected by the charge were acting peacefully this just led to more support for those taunting the police or throwing placards.

At this point the police acted with the apparent [sic] purpose of preventing further access to the embassy (by forcing the march back and down a side street) and forcing people at the embassy away toward the front of the protest perhaps into a small manageable kettle.

However the strength of the crowd and the density of the people was vastly underestimated, as was the determination of people to reach or remain at, the embassy. The tactics of the met (who are used to this sort of thing by now surely) seemed to fall apart at this point, the police line spread across the whole street but had protesters on each side. Then the line broke. Unfortunately for the police it broke at the side closest to the embassy pushing them away from it, they then formed a semi circle in front of two shops (actually reminded me of 300 what with the circle shields and 'turtling').

Then the police used what is apparently their favorite tactic for these situations, the baton charge, against what was largely a peaceful crowd (altho [sic] bits of banners [sic] and sticks were being thrown at this point, I did not see any police from this group taken away or injured, and the throwing was discouraged since some fellow protesters were being hit). However, this charge was extremely poorly executed and while the police did manage to push the crowd back somewhat and hit a few of us in the back with batons (nice), they lost cohesion and ground. They were pushed back even further by protesters walking forward or pushing barriers and eventually retreated into a side street [sic]. Again the police efforts had largely affected peaceful protesters, and indirectly in the crush to retreat affected some children and elderly protesters.

At this point to prevent further baton charges and protect the vulnerable amongst the protest barriers were erected around the police by arab and anarchis [*sic*] groups. Some anti-violence protesters attempted to prevent the moving of the barriers, however as we pointed out we were using them defensively.

This was the sidestreet protesters had been moving down so the police were now effectively cordoned in. I would just like to say, on behalf of those I was with:

we were prepared to let the riot police out of the protester cordon in small groups if they agreed to be photographed and not return to the area today!

Many of the police were obviously angry and frustrated at this point (one even hitting a lamp off of the corner shop with his baton), they couldnt [*sic*] advance on the protest however, but reinforcements ran in to help shore up the line. It [*sic*] around this time the police seemed to go to 'plan B', which was [to] push from the front of the march [and] drive us all back from the embassy and create a kettle along the stretch of road after the corner before the embassy, so I ran to what had previously been the front of the march.

Police had already formed up and started baton charges, it was obvious that leaving this way would have been near impossible and very violent, so the best that could be done is to try and keep as much ground as possible to avoid being pushed into a smaller space and to keep the protest at the embassy gates.

After a couple of failed police charges (congrats to everyone who stood their ground) the police called in the cavalry, literally. Some people panicked, some ran and barriers were being dragged across the street but didn't extend far enough across it to be an affective [*sic*] defense [*sic*]. It was at this point that a dozen or so people including the anarchists (I couldn't tell you who the others were since the only flags left at the front by now were the black/red) called for people to sit down, about 20 did, including one exceptionally brave person that ended up inches away from the hooves of the advancing horses to crys [*sic*] of "get the hell out the way" from the cops trying to drag them to the side.

The sit down was successful and the cavalry was halted, giving those that had retreated time to complete their barrier. non-mounted riot police moved in again to clear the sit down protest, however it fell back to an area about 10 feet in front of the protester manned barriers and reformed in a line across the street. The riot police line stopped a few feet in front of it, some looking ready to charge again and some unclipping their handcuffs. However after a stand off of about 30 minutes a van with loud speakers announced we were all being detained in our current location and should wait patiently to be subject to a "controlled dispersal". So that was it, the police had succeeded in taking back starbucks (which sucked, since it was our only access to the toilet!) but had decided they couldnt [*sic*] move us away from the embassy. at this point some stewards and what I can only describe as a coalition [*sic*] of everyone wearing a high-vis jacket formed a chain across the road facing the police, this would've been great earlier with the threat of charges, at this point it seemed more of a PR stunt / action to prevent protesters trying to break the police cordon.

Then the tedious conclusion - hours in a police cordon in sub zero temperatures [*sic*], pacifists, elderly [*sic*] and children a like [*sic*], together with one confused man who politely asked a police officer which way to go to get out. Followed by some unnessacary [*sic*] searches for (official line the police told us) "weapons". Despite none being seen or used on the day (because they wernt [*sic*] there) and the fact that surely if you had a razor or some such (they searched my wallet so what else could they be looking for?) you would've opted to dump it (down a drain perhaps) rather than attempt to carry it through police

lines. [MP, 10 January 2009. Available from <http://www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2009/01/417998.html>].

31. Suddenly the police rushed to the crowd pushing and hitting anything in front of them[.] [W]hile I was on my way out I saw a women [*sic*] on the floor shouting and crying [;] her leg was broken at [*sic*] the police [.] but they didn't take any notice...so I gave them my back and helped the women [*sic*] up passing her onto possibly one of her friends [.] [At that point] ...I felt something strike my head from the back so I turned around only to receive the edge of there [*sic*] round shield in between my eyes knocking me back followed by a burst full of blood. I somehow got away with the help of some of the crowd [.] I then went asking officer after officer to direct me to the medic [.] some said to f*** off [.] some told me to go home and call an ambulance. I was then given a bottle of water to wash my face but it was still bleeding so I tried again and asked another officer which [*sic*] was outside of the crowd and mumbled something [.] [S]o out of my frustration I shouted at him and demanded that I see a doctor [.] He then in a way jumped at me frightening [frightening] me forcing me to run [.] [A]s I ran I may have shoved him...nothing offensive but was shortly caught and charged with assault on a police officer and given a court date [.] [I] don't feel safe I don't feel fairly treated. [Y, 10 January 2009].

32. The police caused a crush last night outside the Israeli embassy. When they split the crowd in two they compressed one section of the crowd who were unable to get out because the police wouldn't take down the barriers. They then charged the crowd and the consequence was a panic where crushing was taking place until we managed to push over the barriers. These could have created a tragic situation and indeed two people leaving in neck braces suggest for them at least it was tragic. [A, 10 January 2009].

33. ...The police where [*sic*] extremely violent and willingly pushed large crowds of protestors into and over rows of upturned barrier, this is when many injuries occurred. At least four police helmets, 3 riot shields and some other filth apparel was conviscated [*sic*]by the protestors who used it to defend themselves against the pressing riot cops. Fireworks where [*sic*] thrown at police and the bastards in uniform where [*sic*] made to dance as they went off. Just an onlooker myself, but one with a lot of hatred for the police and respect for the actions of the day. As long as people remember to be selective when choosing targets and protect each others backs...[ARA, 10 January 2009].

34. The children getting crushed next to me were younger than 10. People were shouting "stop" and trying to tell the police that young kids were being crushed, but it seems that with their riot helmets on they didn't hear. If anyone saw the kids getting crushed and wass [*sic*] reminded of the much worse things happening to kids in Gaza (50% of the population of Gaza being kids or teenagers) it wouldn't surprise me if they lost their temper. [Citizen Smith, 10 January 2009].

35. There must have been loads of injuries as things were getting quite intense, but it was difficult to see what was going on in different parts of the protest. I was down some of the side streets acting as a medic some of the time, reluctant to get kettled. Unfortunately, the mass of people down these streets were baton charged many times, and chased my mounted coppers. I had to treat a couple of people with head wounds; one woman appeared to be having a fit (and was taken off by police medics); and I saw two young women being carried away from the chaos looking very distressed – their friends say they'd been trampled on by police horses.

Meanwhile, I know of a number of riot vans which got partially trashed – tyres were slashed, sidemirrors ripped off. Barriers for our protest pens were dragged apart and used to create barricades and loads of stuff was lobbed at the cops in retaliation.

It was incredible to see that people were angry enough to fight back after being clobbered, and wonderful to listen to “Free Palestine!” and anti-filth slogans echoing down the side streets...

I'm hardly surprised but nevertheless disgusted to see the abismal [*sic*] BBC reports. Saw the mainstream media doing a story from a comfortable distance well beyond police lines... [Action Medic, 10 January 2009].

36. who the hell do the police think they are protecting/policing? Are the british public safer? Are the british public represented by people who speak for them? No on both counts, the british people have been betrayed AGAIN by traitors acting for foreign powers...[JL, 10 January 2009].

37. I was there. I would normally sympathise with the police in that they have a difficult job to do.

However after last Saturday there [*sic*] unprovoked brutal attack on peaceful demonstrators they deserve everything they get. Glad to hear they had some injuries. Having said that I wish all injured today speedy recovery including the police.

Hope the police use their brains next time or surely more violence and injuries to follow.

The police have always given wrong figures for any anti war march. Last time the zionists were in Trfalgar [*sic*] square the police claimed over 50000 yet the square was not even full. However last saturday protesters could not all fit into the square police say 10000.

Why are [the] police lying? What is their interest in downplaying the figures? [OP, 10 January 2009].

38. The police operation was designed to prevent any sort of meaningful protest. You may recall the vast anti-war demo of 2003, the Countryside Alliance march of a year or two before that, the enormous Make Poverty History demo of 2005... In a few years they'll be largely forgotten, because marching from a to b doesn't do anything. It isn't empowering. It doesn't make the government or your target audience think twice about their actions. Trying to claim the moral high ground relies on the people you're trying to influence having morals. And I believe it's quite clear that, among others, the Israeli government plainly doesn't give a fuck about morality.

On a more immediate level, non-violence in the face of police violence is an untenable position. Philosophically, it's hard to make a case for waiting for the police to work out that what they do's wrong. The TSG and level 2 public-order trained officers who were out attacking people yesterday have all the moral capacity of a snail. Most, if not all, TSG officers enjoy what they do, it gets the adrenalin running, and they are trained to view the people they attack as scum. And I for one would rather not confirm their analysis by taking it and not fighting back.

Violence isn't a panacea, and only a psychopath would recommend it as a tactic under any and all circumstances. When people are under planned attack from the forces of the state, as they were yesterday, violence is, though, the preferable option to being beaten up or running away. The police have a long and sorry history of attacking women and children on demonstrations: see, for example, the Independent on Sunday report on the poll tax riot (1 April 1990), which reports the police charging horses up the steps of St Martins in the Fields at the women and children who'd taken refuge there.

Yes, what we faced yesterday was a lower level of violence than some I can think of. But so were fights many of us will have had at school, when attacked by bullies. Non-violence isn't an option when attacked at school, unless you want to have it happen again and again. And it isn't an option when police attack a crowd, when they create a set of unsafe conditions which precipitate a dangerous situation when even without their assault women and children, not to mention men, were put in peril quite deliberately from being crushed. If people hadn't resisted the police then the next time there's a demonstration the police will feel they have carte blanche to do the same thing again, perhaps with more serious results.

People's dislike of the police does not arise from a vacuum. It comes from events like yesterday's, from arbitrary policing on an everyday basis, from experience of the gulf between ordinary people and the police. This is something created by the police, over so many years that it cannot be anything other than a deliberate policy to sow fear within people. As many academic studies have substantiated, this sort of policing is 'colonial', the sort of policing to which people in Ireland, Hong Kong and India - among others - have been subjected. Should we take this lying down and hope against reality that the powers that be listen? Or should we do the human thing and defend ourselves as best we can against this sort of aggression? I suggest most people would agree with me that when under attack only a fool refuses to defend themselves. [upthera, 11 January 2009].

39. 1. Police stopping and searching visibly Palestinian protestors

Note: The man was carrying a placard.

Officers: ZD 45, ZD 426

2. Police stopping and searching a group of Palestinian protestors who just came out of the tube station.

Police were aggressive in their language and attitude, using words such as 'you! You! You! Come here' and 'shut up!'

The young men were also becoming upset and swearing at the officer.

When the officer was asked why they were stopped out of everyone. He replied 'because you're a different kind of people'.

Officers: ZD 45, ZD 426

Other officer who later joined: YR90, KG101, KG112, KG4, YR180 and KR180

The group was later escorted to the pen.

An officer (bleached hair) approached one of the demonstrators and pushed in. That officer did not have a collar number, and refused to show it.

3. Police officer pushing protest organizer – GK29

4. Stop and search of a man walking around with a pole (he looked Jewish)

Officers: U5618, U5896

5. Told by an inspector that we cannot be in certain areas as their tactical plan involves later moving vehicles into certain areas. We could be hurt.

6. CST approached us, and suggested that we are meant to be on the Palestinian side, as we may be hurt on this side. He then complained to an officer. The officer allowed us to continue.

7. Visibly Muslim protestors were stopped and search before being escorted to a police van. He did not re[-e]merge for some time, and the van was moving. (it later transpired that he was strip searched).

Officers: U2481 & U2768

Police Van: U235

8. Police began cordoning off certain sections, rerouting Muslims, but allowing Israeli protestors to continue unhindered.

9. Violent arrest of a Jewish anti-israel *demonstrator*.

When we arrived on the scene, he was on the floor with a microphone next to him, and 4 officers on top of him.

The young man was shouting, 'I am Jewish, I am Jewish', but that he did not support Israel, and then shouted in hewbrew [*sic*].

Officers carried him away, arresting him for breach of the peace.

Officers: ZD45, KG112, KG4 and others (couldn't get the numbers as it happened very quickly). [MA, 11 January 2009].

40. I arrived at Trafalgar Square around 9:40am on Sunday 11th January 2009. As independent media I wanted to video the rally which was to begin at 11am. I took some stills and video of the frozen fountains and the preparation of the demo - the bundles of placards being brought out, etc.

Around 9:55 a CST steward stopped me and called a police officer claiming I was videoing their security arrangements. Two policemen took me aside, one of them grabbing my left arm (HT-68). They said they were stopping me under section 44 on [*sic*] the terrorism law. One of them took my camcorder and demanded I show him the video I had taken. I showed it to him and he said it showed policemen and CST behind the frozen fountains - it was borderline arrestable offence but they hadn't decided yet whether they were going to arrest me.

I explained I regularly video demos and I was just taking the initial shots before the rally begins which I wanted to cover - they didn't accept by explanation.

They asked me to hold my arms out and open my jacket, they frisked by arms and searched my jacket and pockets. They found a leaflet someone from the pro-Israel rally had given me a few minutes earlier, one policemen explained to the other that it was okay it was from the pro-israel side. I wanted to video the search and interrogation but they wouldn't allow me access to my camcorder. They searched my wallet and found an arabic prayer transliterated in english and asked what it said - I explained it was a prayer my wife had placed in my wallet which I couldn't translate.

They asked for my name, date of birth, address and where I was born and what I did. I explained to HT-68 that I didn't understand the law, legally was I obliged to give him my details? He replied yes under the law I had to provide him my details, so I obliged. They asked if I had ever previously been arrested, I said no. They said they were putting my details through two of their databases - the search came back clean. They told me to stay put whilst they got the police cameraman to arrive. I again asked whether legally I had to submit to them taking mug shots of me - Ht-68 again said yes.

Whilst we waited for the cameraman to arrive I asked the policeman if after the search I could re-enter the rally to video the speeches. He got upset and said if they decide not to arrest me and they hadn't decided yet then I would have to leave Trafalgar Square. I asked what if I videoed from the balcony overlooking the square, he got more upset and said no or they would arrest me for breach of the peace. I noticed across the road they were setting up the counter-demo so I asked the policeman if I could video that - again he said no I would have to leave area and not return.

They demanded I delete the video clips I had taken of the rally in front of them. I deleted one of the shorter clips in front of them, they assumed all of them were deleted.

The police cameraman arrived after about 15 minutes, only after I reluctantly allowed them to photograph me did they finally release me at 10:35am, handing me a receipt of the stop and search and ordering me to leave Trafalgar Square and not return. I crossed the road to the counter-demo to ask legal advice from the IHRC regarding what had just happened. [Abbas, 11 January 2009].

41. 'Special' police officers, possibly from the SWAT team, very quickly ran and charged into our group and dragged someone away. He was dragged around the corner. The manner in which they pulled him was very violent. [nona, 11 January 2009].

42. We must start raising the question of this Community Security Trust – who are nothing but Israeli ex-military in the main, thugs and overtly Zionist. We should embarrass the Metropolitan Police into dropping their co-operation and work with them. They are not neutral they are merely Israeli Embassy bover boys.

I've looked at the accounts of the CST and they reveal virtually nothing other than they are loaded. On the Charity Commission site their trustees are allowed to hide their identities... [GT, 13 January 2009].

43. This evening FD and I were turned away from a panel discussion on Gaza, chaired by Rabbi Danny Rich of Liberal Judaism, by two CST (Community Security Trust) men acting in their usual high-handed arrogant fashion.

We arrived shortly after the meeting began having had trouble locating the venue which changed from the Montagu Centre to the Indian YMCA at short notice because so many people wanted to attend. We were genuinely interested in listening and possibly asking some questions and had no intention of being disruptive.

Since we had previously been at a picket in Parliament Square, I was carrying...[a]...banner and poles in bags. While waiting for FD, I approached the CST guys in a friendly fashion, saying I would like to park the poles somewhere before going into the hall as obviously I did not want them with me at the meeting. They asked how I heard of the meeting and I said I'd read about it on Rabbi Rich's website and was very interested to hear the discussion. They asked if my name was on the list and I said I understood my

friend's name plus one had been put on it in advance by a rabbi friend of hers. While we waited for FD they said they would have to search my bag and I said fine and drew their attention at once to the banner, which I said I would also like to leave outside with the poles. They immediately said "You can't go in". I explained again that I wanted to leave the banner and poles outside and I didn't see that they had the right to stop me attending an important discussion, but they were adamant that they had decided and that was it.

When FD arrived, she joked that IWN was not going to hit anyone with the poles and could leave them at the back of the room, later pointing out that they could just be curtain poles from John Lewis! She then told them that her name had been put on the list by a rabbi, who then appeared and confirmed this, but the CST continued to deny us entry and threatened us with the police. Things got a bit fraught and I went to ask the building reception staff if they could provide a place to leave the banner and poles. They said that as long as I was allowed into the meeting they could put them in a locked store room for me.

I went back to report this but it made no difference to the CST men who were arguing with FD about their right to decide who attended the meeting. She had pointed out to them, as she had in previous confrontations, that they don't own the building, it was not their meeting and they aren't police, so what right did they have to order us not to go in? They even blocked the stairway so she could not go down!

A police officer then arrived and a colleague of Rabbi Rich's came out. Alarmed by the fracas she decided to uphold the CST decision, which was unfortunate given that it would not have occurred without their determination from the start to bar us as soon as they worked out that we were activists. The CST bullies need to be challenged and stood up to. They had lied to the police officer, (and no doubt to the organisers), telling him that we intended to unfurl the banner inside the hall (although they had no idea what kind of banner it was), but even though we explained again that it would be left in a store room if we were allowed in, permission was denied and [we] had no choice but to leave.

The CST were now saying that the banner was not the issue, but they did not want FD in there! So first it was the banner, then it was FD's attendance that was the issue! They sneered when they said her name and talked to her in a condescending manner. Apparently they told the policeman that they had had dealings with FD before. They had indeed, as she will not accept their self-appointed 'authority' to go beyond their basic security duties.

Outside the building, as we chatted amicably with the police officer who seemed not terribly enamoured of the CST methods, a...friend came out having attended the first part of the meeting. She had been allowed in without having her name on any list, so it is clear that the list business was a red herring anyway.

The whole incident is just another example of how the CST act like a private Zionist police force having no regard for the desirability of open discussion within the Jewish community and intent on censoring critics of Israel. We hope that Liberal Judaism will not see the need to call on them in similar circumstances in future. [FD & IWN, 14 January 2009].

44. I was at the protest this Sunday, January 11, 2009. Upon arriving at Sepulveda and Wilshire we were instructed by LAPD that we were to go to Veteran and Wilshire for parking. We parking [sic] and tried to make our way through the Israeli protest there. As we made our way through the crowd several hundred surrounded us, and began calling us terrorists and threatening to kill us. Several grabbed my Palestinian headscarf and threw it on the floor and began spitting on it. They grabbed my sign and broke

it in half. Then the[y] proceeded to grab my arm, pull my hair, and grab my neck. Several of them punched my [*sic*] in my arm and in the back of my head (I have bruises and cuts and pictures from after the attack). I was with 2 other people, my younger brother (18) and my Cousins [*sic*] (17). My younger brother was punched in the back of the head, a lady spit in his face, and his shirt ripped clean off of his back. As our cousin led us out of the circle, the police who were standing just stood there unmoved. When we asked them for protection they said, “good luck” when we asked for directions to the Palestinian side, they said “run.” When we finally arrived at the Palestinian side, the LAPD there was informed. They said, “go back and point them out and then we will arrest them,” he proceeded to roll up his window and was unresponsive. They also refused to escort us to our cars, forcing us to wait for the Israeli protest to end before leaving. [MA, 11 January 2009].

APPENDIX B



B1: Police begin to push protestors without informing them of their intentions. Full video available from <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=rWE8vGFyu7E>



B2: Police employ the services of the 'much loved dog unit'. Full video available from <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=8euzmjxERzM>



B3: Police arrest a protestor. Full video available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=GB&hl=en-GB&v=yr9AwNSVSGs>



B4: Police aggressively manhandle a protestor. Full video available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=GB&hl=en-GB&v=yr9AwNSVSGs>



B5: Officer kicks protestor in the midriff. Full video available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=GB&hl=en-GB&v=yr9AwNSVSGs>



B6: Riot police assault protestors in the Hyde Park underpass. Full video available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=GB&hl=en-GB&v=bJNjE-rbu2o&feature=related>



B7: Riot police officer clashes with protestor. Full video available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?gl=GB&hl=en-GB&v=YC0aPF-u6rY>



B8: Protestor suffers a head wound consequent to police actions.



B9: A single protestor is aggressively handled by an unreasonable amount of officers.



B10: Balaclava clad riot officers handle a protestor. Full video available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=skiN2a9-KQQ&feature=related>



B11: Discriminatory policing. Photo: Nigel Howard Media ©



B12: Riot police mount up.



Angelos Rallis (c)

B13: Riot Police.

Angelos Rallis (c)



B14: Police intimidate protestors.



Angelos Rallis (c)

B15: Intimidation.



Angelos Rallis (c)

B16: Intimidation.



B17: Intimidation.



B18: Police aggression.

B19: Police aggression.



Angelos Rallis (c)

B20: Police aggression.

POLICING, PROTEST AND CONFLICT

B21: Photographical evidence of Ray Davies with visible marks on his face, subsequent to police actions, may be accessed from <http://caatcardiff.blogspot.com/2009/01/ray-davies-injured-in-gaza-demo.html>



B22: Elderly man assaulted.

METROPOLITAN POLICE SERVICE Form 5090(X)

Family name* _____
First Name(s)* ALIZAS
*If name not given, use space to give a description
Gender M F DoB [][][][][][] A/Age _____
EA Code [] SDE Code [] Height _____
Address _____
Post Code [][][][][]
Vehicle Type _____ VRM _____
Stop & Account Behaviour Action Possession of an item Presence in area
Search Grounds SOC 111, Search conducted
Security arrangements at Tribunal
supervising during Tribunal debate
Stop/Search Search (if different location)
Date [1][1][2][1][2][5][0][9] [][][][][][]
Time [1][0][1][5] [][][]
Loc'n Empire Sq SOCU Code [6][2] SOCU Code [][]
Stop Only Search Code [3] Outcome Code [] Arrest Code []
Person Only Y N Vehicle Y N Damage caused* Injury caused*
*Details _____
Searching/Stopping Officer _____
Warrant/Plat No. [2][1][2][1][9] BICO: _____ Team/Unit _____
MP 672/00 Copy for person stopped _____

B23: S44 stop and search.

POLICING, PROTEST AND CONFLICT



B24: Abbas harassed.



B25: Dovid Von Neumann is pelted by objects from the crowd. Full video available from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWwygvGzMp8>



B28: Police officer who harassed OM.

B29: Justin Tallis harassed. Follow this link to see photographer Justin Tallis being aggressively handled by a FIT member, http://www.photoshelter.com/gallery-show/G0000X8s_IKnTpfk



B30: Al Jazeera producer harassed. Full video available from <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=zHtQc1BrFg4>

POLICING, PROTEST AND CONFLICT

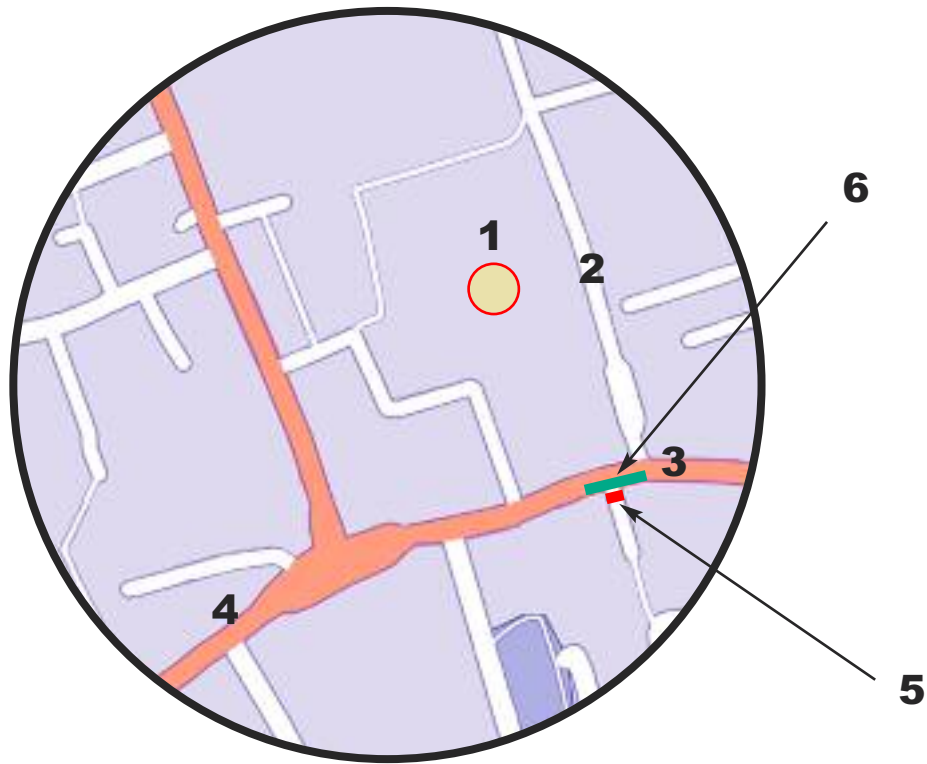


B31: Teen arrested.



B32: Teen arrested.

APPENDIX C



1. Embassy of Israel
2. Kensington Palace Gardens
3. Kensington Road
4. Kensington High Street
5. Paved area leading off Kensington Court (a 24 hour / 7 days a week vigil was held at the Kensington High Street end of this, every day until the ends of the conflict)
6. Area where police placed nightly demonstrations regardless of size.

'Policing, Protest and Conflict: A Report into the Policing of the London Gaza Demonstrations in 2008 – 2009', by Adam Majeed. This a response to the myriad of complaints received by the Islamic Human Rights Commission (IHRC) from demonstrators during the 22 Day War on Gaza. IHRC is no stranger to the problems of partisan policing and harassment of activists, and this report follows in the line of previous work, spanning a decade.

In some cases, the recommendations of IHRC have been adopted or at the very least, hotly debated. However, this report shows that there is still a long way to go.

The Metropolitan Police is generally at its best when listening to its sternest critics. That was the view of Deputy Assistant Commissioner John Grieve who led the Met's radical and effective response to Lord Macpherson's stinging criticism at the conclusion of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. As Denis O'Connor, Chief Inspector of the Constabulary, makes clear in 'Adapting to Protest' the Met needs to reflect on its public order policing operations so as to revive a style of policing '... based on minimal force and anchored in public consent'. This robust and challenging IHRC report, 'Policing, Protest and Conflict: A Report into the Policing of the London Gaza Demonstrations in 2008 – 2009' is therefore precisely the kind of perspective the Met should engage with as it seeks to restore confidence in its unique tradition of public order policing in the capital.

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Muslim Contact Unit, Metropolitan Police Service.

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