



Women's rights organisations oppose the Public Order Bill: the right to protest is a feminist issue

As specialist Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and women's rights organisations, we stand together in resisting the oppressive measures outlined in the Public Order Bill.

Protest is a feminist issue, firmly embedded in the struggle for women's rights – and particularly the rights of Black and minoritised women. Our fight to end violence against women relies heavily upon our ability to gather together, to mourn our sisters, to expose injustice, and to collectively demand change.

These proposals, however, hand the police an alarming range of powers which will see expansive crackdown on our right to protest and our ability to express dissent about issues such as the police failures and state complicity in VAWG.

The raft of measures include protest banning orders, which could include intrusive electronic surveillance of protesters, as well as a further expansion of stop and search, which will worsen existing inequalities and increase surveillance and discriminatory treatment of already over-policed Black and minoritised communities.

Against the backdrop of a much-maligned Policing Bill becoming law – despite strong public resistance – and new, cynical attacks on our Human Rights Act, we oppose the Government's attempt to rush through yet another disturbing set of proposals. These measures, previously rejected by Parliament as part of the Policing Bill, threaten our rights and systematically shut down our ability to hold the powerful to account.

The proposals must also be seen in the wider context of a crisis in policing, including women's lack of trust and confidence in the institution. It is misguided and dangerous to deliver yet more sweeping powers at a time where there is an ongoing independent inquiry and review which have not concluded, constant revelations about police-perpetrated abuse, IOPC reports of institutional misogyny and a High Court ruling criticising the response to the vigil for Sarah

Everard. The introduction and contents of this Bill suggests that women and girls are not being heard when we make it clear that we do not feel safe or protected.

Such attempts to erode our right to protest are a stark warning to those most likely to be impacted by human rights abuses, over-policing and state violence – including Black and minoritised women, migrant women, Deaf and disabled women and members of the LGBT+ community.

Far from protecting the public, this Bill poses a threat to all of us, our fight to end violence against women, and to our democracy. We are united in standing against it.

Agenda

The Angelou Centre

Asian Women's Resource Centre

Centre for Women's Justice

Cymorth i Ferched Cymru – Welsh Women's Aid

Deaf Ethnic Women's Association

End Violence Against Women Coalition

Hull Sisters

IDAS (Independent Domestic Abuse Services)

Latin American Women's Rights Service

Nia

Rape Crisis England and Wales

Refuge

Rights of Women

Southall Black Sisters

Standing Together

Women for Refugee Women

The Women's Liberation Collective