

LIBERTY

NON-VIOLENT EXTREMISM

MARCH 2024

A Policy & Campaigns officer presented a paper on how Liberty should address attempts to legislate against 'non-violent extremism'.

Since the attacks on Israel by Hamas on October 7 2023, and the subsequent violence in Gaza, outpouring of political activity, the Government's rhetoric has been divisive and incendiary, with the former Home Secretary calling Palestine solidarity marches "hate marches."

As well as threatening further clampdowns on protest, some politicians, senior police officers and some civil society groups have argued for greater enforcement of existing counter-terror and hate crime laws.

The paper argues that Liberty should treat moves to further legislate or devise policy against 'non-violent extremism' with scepticism, and if responding to Government attempts to do so should bear the previously agreed free expression principles, as well as the following principles in mind:

- I. There are already a broad range of terror offences and hate crime offences, meaning the onus is on the State to justify why existing powers are not sufficient.
- II. Poorly and broadly defined laws and policies risk unjustifiably interfering with the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of thought, conscience and religion in particular, as well as other rights.
- III. Further counter-extremism legislation risks entrenching disproportionality and discrimination.
- IV. Tackling 'non-violent extremism' requires a rights-based response.

Policy Council endorsed these principles.