# Crime and Policing Bill

## Quakers in Britain briefing for Lords Second Reading

Quakers in Britain are a faith group grounded in the values of peace, equality, sustainability and truth. These lead us to work towards a responsive democracy, flourishing civil society, and strong rights to protect speech and protest.

The Crime and Policing Bill 2025 adds new offences that risk criminalising protestors and disproportionately impacting marginalised groups. We are particularly concerned about Clause 124, which would allow further restrictions on protests in the vicinity of places of worship. We’re calling for clause to be removed, or at the very least amended to make it more specific and contained.

## Protecting places of worship

We are alarmed at the rise in anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim hatred and strongly believe that every faith group should have the ability to worship freely. We recognise that many people of faith, especially those from Jewish and Muslim communities, are understandably afraid and are demanding action to protect their places of worship.

However, we are concerned about Clause 124 of the Bill, which would allow further restrictions on protests in the vicinity of places of worship if police decide that the protests may deter people from carrying out religious activities.

We fear that this clause will further restrict the rights of nonviolent protestors, while also doing nothing to protect places of worship from targeted violence and harassment.

We do not see the threat to worshipping communities as coming from nonviolent protestors, but from individuals and small groups carrying out targeted harassment and violence. Politicians must not place worshippers and nonviolent protestors in fixed opposition to one another, or blur the lines between racial and religious violence on the one hand, and nonviolent protest on the other.

People of many faiths – including Christians, Muslims and Jews – take part in nonviolent protests on a range of issues. The national marches on Palestine, which the government says this legislation is intended to address, have never targeted places of worship or religious institutions.

## Existing powers

The police have existing powers to address racial and religious hatred and violence.

Under the Public Order Act 1986 the police canimpose conditions on protests that may compel people not to worship, disrupting the activities of an organisation, or intimidate or harass people in the vicinity.

Laws such as the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006 enable police to address chants and placards that could stir up hatred and incite violence against faith groups and places of worship.

## Vague and broad clause

Clause 124, as currently worded, is too vague and broad. If Peers do not wish to remove it, we ask that they at least amend it to make it more specific and contained.

Firstly, the clause targets protests “in the vicinity” of a place of worship, which is very vague and we believe needs to be set at a specific distance. The concentration of places of worship in cities, including central London, mean that this clause as drafted could have a severe effect on people’s ability to protest.

Secondly, the clause would broaden the circumstances in which the police could impose conditions on protest further by allowing them to be imposed where a protest “may” be intimidating to a “person of reasonable firmness” and “deter” them from entering the place of worship. This is a very low threshold and very difficult for police to determine.

We believe this needs to be changed to ensure the clause only applies when there is an *intent* to intimidate, and where people are *prevented* from entering the place of worship. Otherwise it could affect a very broad range of protests and circumstances.

## Quakers’ experience

Quakers are called to listen for the will of God and follow it with our words and actions. This leads many Quakers to take part in nonviolent protests and to host nonviolent protest groups in their meeting houses.

Quakers have first-hand experience of the repression caused by recent anti-protest legislation. Metropolitan police raided Westminster Quaker meeting house in March 2025 and arrested six people who were planning a non-violent protest. Many Quakers have also been arrested for nonviolent protests on climate justice and Palestine.

Laws that affect our ability to protest also affect our ability to live in accordance with our religious values of peace, equality, sustainability and truth. They lead to Quakers facing legal consequences for actions motivated by love for our neighbour.

## Next steps

We look forward to working with you to improve this legislation. We hope that you will use our briefing to speak during the Second Reading and work to amend the bill during Committee Stage.

We are also committed to listening, educating ourselves and working closely with interfaith partners and legislators to tackle racial and religious prejudice and violence wherever it occurs.

If you would like to discuss anything further, please contact:
Grace Da Costa, Public Affairs and Media Manager, Quakers in Britain
graced@quaker.org.uk / 020 7663 1138