



**Amnesty International Oxford City Group**

## **STOP THE RIGHTS RAID KILL THE BILL**

### **Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill – Democracy Under Attack**

#### **A serious threat to our freedom of expression - a vital human right in a democracy**

Our right to demonstrate and protest is universal, laid down in the European Convention on Human Rights. (Article 11). The bill gives ministers and police drastic new powers to ban or limit peaceful protest for very broadly-defined reasons – such as ‘noise’ or ‘causing annoyance’

#### **The government can decide for itself what protests to allow or prohibit**

The Home Secretary would have unlimited powers to define ‘*serious disruption .....to the activities of an organization nearby.*’ These powers could be used with little or no parliamentary scrutiny, and in ways that would expand the scope of the powers under the Bill once passed.

#### **Police officers will be both lawmakers and law enforcers – this is dangerous for democracy**

Police officers will now be able to make judgments on the intensity of any noise; whether chants are ‘*intimidating*’ or ‘*harassing*’ or causing ‘*unease*’, ‘*alarm*’ or ‘*distress*’. They could impose any conditions they consider necessary to prevent ‘*disorder, damage, disruption, impact, or intimidation*’. As any large political demonstration will generate *noise* and aims to have *impact* it seems clear that this is a disguised attack on the right to protest.

#### **Vaguely worded law means more chance of it being misapplied**

The police will have to test their own powers. Recent aggressive police behaviour at ‘Black Lives Matter’ and ‘Sarah Everard’ protests failed to distinguish between violent and peaceful protestors. Force was used in unjustified situations, including against journalists, medics and legal

observers. This bill is likely to make police more heavy-handed and will erode essential trust between the public and the state.

### **The bill criminalises protest organisers who break conditions**

They can be sent to prison for inadvertent breaches of conditions imposed by police on the basis of 'they should have known better.'

### **The bill criminalizes trespass**

Trespass has been a civil matter for hundreds of years. In aiming to unfairly coerce gypsies and traveller communities, it threatens citizens' right to roam over land, even if they cause no damage.

**Given the government's large majority, this bill is almost certain to pass, but freedom-loving citizens must protest.**

## **PLEASE JOIN US IN TAKING THIS SIMPLE ACTION**

**EMAIL your MP and urge them to vote against the bill. Use this text or write your own.**

**'I am writing to urge you to vote against the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. The sections on protests and trespass undermine our basic human rights and freedoms by giving such wide and vague powers to ministers and police that they could prevent or limit our ability to peacefully express our opinions. Events in other democratic countries like USA and Hungary have shown that democracy needs alert defenders.'**

**It will help the Oxford City Amnesty group if you copy us in, so we can track the action.**

**For more information:**

<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/stop-rights-raid-week-action>

**Email:** secretary@oxford-amnesty.org.uk