



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

3 November 2023

Dear Mark

Remembrance weekend is a moment of national significance. It is a weekend where the nation comes together to pay tribute to the fallen and veterans, to honour their sacrifice for our freedoms, and to resolve that those sacrifices will never be in vain. It will be especially poignant this year, as we are once again reminded of the horrors of conflict and the need to continually defend our values.

I am deeply concerned that a number of protests are currently planned to disrupt those acts of Remembrance next weekend.

To plan protests on Armistice Day is provocative and disrespectful, and there is a clear and present risk that the Cenotaph and other war memorials could be desecrated, something that would be an affront to the British public and the values we stand for.

While rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of association are protected under the law, these are qualified rights and must be set against the protection of health or morals and the rights and freedoms of others. The right to remember, in peace and dignity, those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for those freedoms must be protected also.

In your evidence to the London Assembly yesterday, you said that protests “will not collide with or interfere with” Remembrance events. The Metropolitan Police have separately said that officers will “use all the powers available to us to ensure anyone intent on disrupting it will not succeed”. This robust approach is welcome. The police have the powers necessary to act to ensure protests do not disrupt or disturb Remembrance activity next weekend, including:

- Sections 12 and 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 give Chief Constables the power to apply conditions to the location, size and duration of public processions and assemblies where necessary to prevent serious public disorder, serious disruption to the life of the community, or intimidation.
- The Public Order Act 2023, which we passed earlier this year, gave police officers new powers that you personally requested to tackle novel protest tactics, such as slow walking and the disruption of infrastructure.
- Section 137 of the Highways Act 1980 prevents the wilful obstruction of the free passage along a highway without lawful authority or excuse.
- Section 13 of the Public Order Act 1986 gives powers to Chief Constables to apply to the Home Secretary and Mayor of London for protests to be banned within a local area if he or she believes that imposing conditions will not be enough to prevent the march leading to serious public disorder.

These decisions are rightly operationally independent from politicians, on the basis of a full operational assessment and engagement with protest organisers and the wider community. I have asked the Home Secretary to support you in doing everything necessary to protect the sanctity of Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday. You will have mine and the Government's full support in making robust use of all of your powers to protect Remembrance activity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by 'ich' and a final flourish that resembles an 'S'.