

Three people who displayed paraglider images at pro-Palestine rally guilty of terror offence

But all they got was a slap on the wrist. From the [London Evening Standard](#) and [The Telegraph](#)

Three people who displayed [images of paragliders](#) at a pro-Palestinian march have been convicted of a terrorist offence.

Heba Alhayek, 29, and Pauline Ankunda, 26, attached images of paragliders to their backs, while Noimutu Olayinka Taiwo, 27, stuck one to the handle of a placard.

Ms Ankunda was filmed on video chanting: “France is a terror state, the UK is a terror state, Italy is a terror state.”



Heba Alhayek, left, and Pauline Ankunda arrive at Westminster magistrates' court | CREDIT: Jonathan Brady/PA



Noimutu Olayinka Taiwo, seen arriving at court, believed the paraglider picture 'was a symbol of liberation and peace' | CREDIT: Jonathan Brady/PA

Incidentally, masks are rarely seen in London these days; other than at Pro-Palestinian rallies, or a few very nervous people

who I suspect have had chemotherapy recently, or similar. That these defendants are hiding their faces suggests either that they retain a sense of shame at wrongdoing, or that their actions will attract criticism.

At a trial at Westminster magistrates court, two of the defendants argued that police had been mistaken about the images, fuelled by a social media storm, and the images were actually parachutes – a “well-known nationalist symbol of peace”.

Victoria Brittain, an author and former Guardian journalist, gave evidence for the defence and said images associated with flying were a common theme in the Palestinian imagination. All Palestinians have a strong feeling of “being imprisoned”, especially in the Gaza strip, said Ms Brittain. “Everyone wants to escape.”

She referenced the Banksy mural called the Flying Balloon Girl on the West Bank Wall, which depicts a young girl being lifted up into the air by balloons. “It is one of the most often copied Banksy images. I think everybody knows it.” She said that birds, kites and balloons are common themes in Palestinian art and literature. *None of these are paragliders. Especially not paragliders carrying machine guns and knives.*

A lawyer representing the two defendants claimed police have “mistaken” what they saw that day and were fed a narrative by partisan social media groups.

In a police interview, the pair initially claimed someone at the demonstration “who was not known to them” had stuck the images to their backs, before changing their statements, admitting they had attached them themselves, the court was told.

When arrested and interviewed under caution, Taiwo claimed to have been handed the placard and not paid proper attention to the “blurry image” it displayed, the court heard.

But they were all found guilty on Tuesday by Deputy Chief Magistrate Tan Ikram of a terror offence.

Handing the trio a 12-month conditional discharge, Mr Ikram said he had “decided not to punish” the defendants.

“Each of you stands convicted of a terrorist offence,” he continued. “There is nothing to suggest the police of their own volition were going to take any action. You’ve not hidden the fact you were carrying these images. You crossed the line, but it would have been fair to say that emotions ran very high on this issue. Your lesson has been well learnt. I do not find you were seeking to show any support for Hamas.”

Nick Price, head of the CPS Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division, said: “All three women knowingly displayed the images of paragliders in central London and therefore showed their support for Hamas – a proscribed terrorist organisation. The fact that these images were being displayed in the context of a protest opposing the Israeli response to the Hamas attacks demonstrates a glorification of the actions taken by the group. Displaying these images could be viewed as celebrating the use of paragliders as a tactic to breach the Gaza/Israel border, and creates a risk of encouraging others to support Hamas.

That sentence is derisory. Unfortunately the Unduly Lenient Sentence scheme only applied on sentences from the higher of our two criminal courts, the Crown Court. Mr Ikram would have done better to send these three women to the Crown Court for sentencing after conviction. But he thought they did not deserve punishment, so of course he didn't. I am seriously worried about the calibre of recruits to the judiciary over the last 20 years. When the service of my cohort of old-school officials was dispensed with in 2008 in the Ministry of Justice and the Home Office (ostensibly to save funds but in reality to increase the diversity of the new and cheaper recruits) it was noticable that the division not facing cuts

was the one charged with increasing the diversity of the Judiciary. 'Da sisterz' have done their work well.