

**DR. CAROLINE LUCAS**  
Green Party

for the South East of England

Charles Clarke  
Home Office  
50 Queen Anne's Gate  
London SW1H 9AT

April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005

Dear Mr Clarke,

We write to express our concern that a legal action which is being brought against a number of Sussex peace activists under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 threatens to contravene the UK's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights.

A Brighton-based firm EDO/MDM Technologies is seeking an injunction under the Act to prevent 14 named individuals and two groups 'SmashEDO' and 'Bombs Out Of Brighton' peacefully demonstrating, within the law, outside its premises. The injunction, if granted, would only allow a weekly protest for two hours on a Thursday afternoon. This would violate the rights of assembly and expression as defined in the European Convention and incorporated into UK law in the Human Rights Act 1998.

Yesterday, the High Court adjourned the hearing until next Friday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

We are very concerned that this case typifies the way human rights and civil liberties have been eroded in the UK in recent years, and that it represents the misuse of a statute designed to protect domestic victims of stalking but out of the financial reach of non-corporate plaintiffs. Recent cases involving the Act have all involved attempts to criminalise and limit protest against corporate activities by animal rights campaigners. This is the first time the Act has been used against peace demonstrators and, as such, it represents a worrying trend.

It appears the case is being used to test the boundaries of the Act and, if the injunction is granted, we fear a marked increase in the use of the law to stifle legitimate peaceful protest aimed at corporations.

We would be grateful if you could clarify whether this is, in fact, the intended purpose of the Protection from Harassment Act, and what measures you are talking to ensure that the high Court's ruling conforms with the UK's international commitments under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas SE England MEP

CLlr Keith Taylor - Green group convenor