

Bhatt Murphy Solicitors

PRESS RELEASE

25 May 2012

HIGH COURT TO HEAR CHALLENGE TO ROYAL WEDDING DAY ARRESTS BY MET POLICE

Bhatt Murphy will present a challenge in the High Court on Monday 28 May 2012 to the legality of the arrests and detention of fifteen individuals by the Metropolitan Police on the day of the Royal Wedding on 29 April 2011.

Each of the fifteen was released only after the wedding celebrations had concluded, and no further action was taken against any of them. It is their case that the arrests – to prevent ‘anticipated’ breaches of the peace according to the police – were unlawful, bringing into question whether there was an unlawful policy behind the police operation on the day. Their case has been linked with three other challenges, all of which raise similar issues.

The fifteen include four people in ‘zombie’ costumes arrested while they were queuing up to buy coffee at Starbucks; another person dressed as a ‘zombie’ who was picked up on Frith Street; a single individual who was arrested apparently because he was “recognised” as a potential protester whilst simply walking down a road; and a group who were arrested whilst making their way from Trafalgar Square to a Republican picnic in Red Lion Square.

Sophie Naftalin, one of the team at Bhatt Murphy acting for the fifteen, said:

“This matter touches upon one of the most important of constitutional rights - namely the right to free expression - which is fundamental to any properly functioning democracy. While our clients recognise the difficulties of policing large scale operations, they consider it vital that the police must strike the right balance between maintaining public order and allowing dissent. That balance has plainly not been achieved here, and our clients have been left with no option but to place matters in the hands of the courts. They hope that lessons will thereby be learnt by the police in time to avoid any repetition for those who might wish to dissent or protest during the Jubilee or the Olympics.”

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- 1 For press report of the issues surrounding the claimants’ arrests, please see: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/video/2012/apr/29/royal-wedding-protesters-challenge-police-video>
- 2 Our clients are represented by Bhatt Murphy Solicitors and Karon Monaghan QC of Matrix Chambers and Ruth Brander of Doughty Street Chambers.