



North East
Anti-Racism
Coalition

We have been asked about our stance on public protest and countering groups described as “racist”, “far right” and “fascist”. We share this in the spirit of “thinking out loud”. We are open to challenge and welcome different perspectives to help us deepen our thinking and understanding.

These are contentious issues, and positions about what is “the most important approach” are held with passion.

www.northeastantiracism.org.uk

- As a coalition, we are hopeful that we can create a space to create better understanding between individuals and groups that hold different opinions and energies about what “anti-racism” means to them -

knowing that we all share a passion in challenging racism and hatred based on religious identity, and we are stronger together. Protests do not happen in a vacuum. As such, they will be perceived very differently based on people's different contexts and experiences.

Communities who have lived experience of racism - and in some cases the reality of having to defend themselves in the face of racist violence - may perceive what others are intending to be a



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celebration of patriotism, or an event to raise concerns about the current asylum system, as an emboldening of those who hold racist views, and an encouragement for acts of hostility and direct violence. If a protest is being organised by people who are known to deliberately want to spread division and conflict, it can be perceived that everyone attending the demonstration has the same primary goal. The nature of protest and demonstration - often framed by what a group opposes and who is to blame - make it difficult to hear beyond the shouting.

At NEARC, we would hope that as a society we can find better ways of understanding each others feelings and needs about such important and sensitive issues, however public protest has been, and should remain,



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a vital part of our democratic process.

We hope this, and the statement below helps to clarify our position.

“We acknowledge and uphold the right to public protest. We also know the anxiety, fear, sadness and anger that protests aiming to spread fear, division and suspicion can cause.

When faced with division and hostility we should respond with solidarity. For some this will involve standing in opposition to those protesting. We believe in open, inclusive demonstrations of solidarity – actions where people feel confident to attend without a desire for direct confrontation, finding positive ways of celebrating our communities and what makes them strong – and we will seek to support such efforts wherever we can.



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However, we believe that solidarity is much broader than protest. Many in our neighbourhoods, workplaces, and communities will be feeling scared and isolated by the current wave of protests and use of flags to send messages of hostility. We can all make a difference by acting in solidarity;

- Reaching out to those around you. Extending the hand of friendship and solidarity. Making it clear to those wishing to spread fear and division – this is not our way, we are strong because we are unified.
- Reaching out to our neighbours, our colleagues – showing the power of kindness in action. Reminding them of



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what they mean to us. Taking to our socials – spreading some love, shining some hope.

- Standing alongside those who are scared.
- Understanding and supporting others who are committed to defeating racism and hatred based on religious identity.

We see all of these actions as aligning with the principles of nonviolent resistance.

You can join us at the North East Anti-Racism Coalition

<https://www.northeastantiracism.org.uk/>

We're a coalition of individuals of all ethnicities and organisations aiming to make the North East a region that actively opposes



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racism, and hatred based on religious identity. We're working towards 5 key objectives: build a strong and visible anti-racist movement; support neighbourhood action; shifting public attitudes through a pledge and campaign; provide practical help and learning; and develop a knowledge and evidence hub."

A few words on what we understand to be nonviolent resistance.

Nonviolent resistance can be understood as a deliberate, collective strategy of opposing injustice, oppression, or harmful policies without resorting to physical violence. Instead, it relies on moral courage, empathy,



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and creative action to challenge harmful systems while still respecting the dignity of all people involved – even opponents.

Nonviolent resistance is not passive but active – a courageous stand that combines understanding, empathy, clarity, challenge, and creativity to transform injustice without replicating cycles of harm.

Empathy and Understanding – It begins with understanding first, listening deeply to others (even those in opposition), so that resistance is rooted in connection rather than alienation.

Clarity and Communication – It uses words and actions that make the message clear, aiming to be understood rather than escalate conflict.



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Taking Ownership – Practitioners see themselves as active agents with responsibility for their own choices and conversations, exercising moral agency rather than blaming others.

Openness – Staying open to dialogue, different perspectives, and creative solutions – even in the midst of conflict – helps avoid entrenchment.

Meeting Needs – Nonviolent resistance is driven by the recognition of human needs – for justice, dignity, safety, respect, and belonging – on all sides. By appealing to shared needs, it builds bridges instead of burning them.

Challenging with Respect – It involves

challenging harmful behaviour or unjust systems without attacking the person, balancing empathy with challenge so as not to dehumanise opponents.

Preparation and Courage – Nonviolent resistance requires preparation (knowing the “why, what, how, when, where, and who”) and the courage to face hostility without retaliation.

At heart, nonviolent resistance is about transforming confrontation into creative collaboration, resisting harm while seeking reconciliation and mutual recognition.



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