



Police

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Letters

# We fight extremism, not lawful protest

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Some of George Monbiot's points (Comment, 19 May) need clarifying. The police service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has a long and proud history of facilitating lawful protest. Domestic extremism refers only to the crime and disorder committed by this minority, not their views; this has included offences such as threats, harassment and criminal damage, or at its worst, posting letter bombs, planting incendiary devices and grave desecration.

The National Extremism Tactical Co-ordination Unit does not regard all protesters as extremists - the unit is committed to ensuring that the vast majority of campaigners who protest peacefully and lawfully can continue to do so without their protest being hijacked by the small minority who seek to commit criminal acts to further their cause.

Netcu, the National Domestic Extremism Team and National Public Order Intelligence Unit are staffed with serving police officers. Despite repeated claims, Netcu is not an operational unit and is not responsible for "deploying officers from regional forces"; it does not carry out any investigations; it does not collect nor hold intelligence on a database; it does not provide intelligence to industry or receive money from it. The role of Netcu is to tackle domestic extremism by providing preventive security guidance and

support to police forces, and working proactively with businesses, academic institutions and other organisations.

People have a right to hold extremist and political views, but if they commit crime in the belief that it will help their cause, the majority of society would expect the police to deal with them.

**Anton Setchell**

National Coordinator for Domestic Extremism

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