

Public anger grows over police shooting of innocent London man

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On Wednesday, September 22 at 7:30 p.m. Harry Stanley, 46, was having a drink in his local pub, The Alexander in Hackney, East London. He had just been released from hospital after undergoing an operation for cancer. At 7:45 p.m. Harry left the pub on the way home to watch a football match. His house was only 600 yards away.

Harry was carrying a coffee table leg in a plastic bag. Unbeknown to him, someone had allegedly phoned the police to tell them Harry was carrying a shotgun. As he reached the junction of Victoria Park Road and Freemont Street, two armed police officers from Scotland Yard's specialist SO19 firearms team pulled up behind him. Both were carrying Glock 9mm self-loading pistols.

The police say they challenged Harry twice as he turned towards his home. Two shots were fired. One hit him in the hand and the other in the head, killing him instantly. The police at the time of the shooting were just 15 feet away. A doctor who came out of his house to attend the victim was told by police to get back inside.

Harry's body was left on the pavement well into the night. Even when the police knew his identity, the family was not told until the next day. His wife and children unknowingly walked past his partially covered body on their way home.

Mr. Stanley was the second person to die at the hands of local police in the last two months. Sarah Thomas died while in custody at Stoke Newington police station. One local resident, Tom Benfield, tied a message to a tree near the shooting stating "Here fell Harry, a neighbour. It can't be right for a piece of wood. We demand answers not fairytales!"

Last weekend the family spoke out for the first time since the shooting. Harry's eldest son Jason told the

press: "For an unarmed man walking home to be shot in this way is amazing. No one should die under these circumstances. For him to die of cancer I could handle, but for him to be shot by the police is not something I can take in or believe."

Anger is widespread throughout the local area. At a public meeting called by the family on October 7, Mitch Dublin, a Unison Convenor at St. Andrews Road cleaning depot, reported a two-hour meeting by workers expressing their sympathy with the family. Collections have been made throughout the area.

Jason Stanley thanked everyone for coming and said, "I hope it doesn't happen to another family. If we get everyone behind us we'll take it all the way."

Hugh Callaghan of the Birmingham Six, who was falsely convicted of the bombing of a Birmingham pub by the IRA, said he was involved in a miscarriage of justice and was at the meeting to offer his support to the family. "When I look back at what happen to me and I see what has happened to Harry, has anything changed as regard miscarriages of justice? The police are still fitting people up and still murdering people on the streets", he said.

A resident of Gore Road said that the police had been in position for an hour before the murder. Several people called for a public inquiry into the shooting, as opposed to one conducted by the police.

Traditionally police in Britain have remained unarmed, but this is increasingly a thing of the past. Operations involving Armed Response Vehicles (ARVs) of the type used by SO19 officers in the Stanley killing have increased in England and Wales from 2,423 four years ago to 7,510 last year. During the last year alone, armed police were deployed on 1,345 occasions. Harry Stanley was the third person to be shot dead this year. In January, an officer was charged

with murder and manslaughter following the killing of James Ashley, 39, who was shot while he lay unarmed in bed with his girlfriend.



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