

Relatives of London man shot dead by police speak out

Keith Lee
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Harry Stanley, a 46-year-old father, was shot dead by armed police in east London on the evening of September 22. He was returning home from the local pub, carrying a coffee table leg in a plastic bag, when officers from Scotland Yard's specialist SO19 firearms team shot him twice. Harry's death has caused outrage in the local community.

On October 14 family and friends held a lobby of the local Community and Police Consultative Committee as part of their campaign to uncover the truth behind his killing. Stanley is the third person to be shot dead by police this year in England. The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to Harry's sister Janice Bull and his brother James Stanley.

Janice told the WSWs:

"I'm shocked and stunned. You hear about people getting killed by the police, but when they are killed over a table leg—it is unbelievable. The police have been unable to justify their actions. They say they were following up a report that a man had been seen with a gun. No gun was found. He was carrying a Queen Ann table leg, which looks nothing like gun.

"They shot him from 15 feet. He was a heavily built chap. They say that there is no shoot-to-kill policy in this country, but they didn't shoot him in his body—they hit him in the head. A shot to the head is a shoot-to-kill policy.

"All we have heard is that there was another emergency call made, involving guns. Apparently the description was nothing like Harry—so why did they pick on him?

"The family weren't told of his death until 4:30 p.m. the next day. Yet he had his passport and birth certificate in his pocket. His passport has my brother, Peter, as Harry's next of kin, along with his phone number. Peter lives just 200 yards from where Harry

was shot, yet he was not even informed.

"They left Harry lying in the street, uncovered, for hours. His wife and daughter went past, but didn't know it was him. A lady asked them to cover the body up, but they would not do it because they said they were waiting for the forensic experts to arrive. That did not stop them interfering with the bag with the table leg in it, though.

"They shot him in cold blood and left him there for all to see. They gave him no dignity.

"Two medics came running to Harry's aid just after he was shot, but they were told by the police to get back indoors. If they have nothing to hide, why didn't they let the medics look at him? These are the questions we want answered. This demonstration is against the police killing innocent people.

"It's a lie that the British police are unarmed. They travel in cars that have guns locked in a special safe. They do not have to contact a specialist headquarters to have units sent out—they already have the guns in the cars and these are patrolling all over London's streets. Nobody is safe because the police are just gun happy."

Harry's brother James explained how the family intends to continue the campaign:

"From this lobby we want people to spread the word of Harry's death and how it happened. We want the campaign to build up. I've heard that a meeting is to be held in Scotland and I'm prepared to speak anywhere to bring this to the public's attention.

"No doubt there will be an attempt to justify his killing by raising all kinds of things from his past. Well, we know Harry was no angel, but neither are millions of others. The point is that he didn't get shot for anything he had done in the past. He was shot for carrying a piece of wood.

"Killings like this have happened before and they will

happen again and again, until people in this country unite together against it."

Jim Wills, Harry's friend for 18 years, also took part in the lobby. He told the *WSWS*:

"The issue is to uncover what happened that evening. In my opinion, Harry was murdered. The police opened fire on an unarmed man. Even according to the police's own account, Harry never got a chance to say anything. They said at the inquest that they challenged him, and he turned round. What did they expect him to do? If someone shouts, 'Armed police!' behind you, you will turn round. Then they immediately opened fire, claiming that they believed they were under threat. To me, that is a shoot-to-kill policy. It's murder and it's got to stop.

"If killing someone wasn't bad enough, the way the police treated Harry's family afterwards was terrible. They did not inform the family until the following afternoon—even though they live just around the corner from where he was shot. They left Harry's body uncovered for three hours, where local children could just look on. Then they left his blood all over the street. Harry's daughter—who passed by some time afterwards—unknowingly walked in her own father's blood and was told by a friend to take care in case she slipped in it. It was only the neighbours who had the common decency to clean it up.

"The police's behaviour has been disgusting. They are acting like an army of occupation; they are not part of our community. There are 24 policemen guarding a minor royal like Princess Alexandra, while you have thousands of families in Hackney completely unprotected. This is a class issue."

See Also:

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[15 October 1999]



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