

Britain: Did police shoot to kill in Forest Gate anti-terror raid?

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15 June 2006

On Tuesday, June 13, Mohammed Abdul Kahar and his brother Abdul Koyair spoke publicly for the first time of the anti-terror raid on their east London home, during which Kahar was shot. They also spoke of the seven days during which they were detained by police before being freed without charge.

Their accounts were harrowing.

Kahar, 23, and Koyair, 20, are the British-born sons of Bangladeshi parents and live with their family in Forest Gate. In the early hours of Friday June 2, their home was targeted for an anti-terror raid. Some 250 police officers were involved in the operation, after an informant apparently tipped off police that a suicide bomb vest laced with poisonous chemicals was being prepared on the premises.

Fifty police, including armed officers dressed in black and wearing hoods, broke down the front door and ran into the house.

Kahar told a press conference that he was woken at 4:00 a.m. by the screams of his younger brother. "I could hear him screaming, so I got out of bed. I just had my boxer shorts on and a T-shirt. It was dark and I assumed a robbery was happening. As I made the first step down the stairs, my brother was still screaming and I turned round to look at the stairs."

Even at this point, family members did not know that the armed men in their home were police. Kahar recounted how, right up until the moment he was dragged into a waiting police van, he believed his family was being targeted by burglars, intent on murder.

Kahar explained how an armed man "looked at me straight away and shot. As soon as I turned the steps and we both had eye contact he shot me."

"As soon as I turned round, I saw an orange spark and a big bang," he said—the sound of a gunshot.

The force of the bullet, which hit him in the chest, propelled Kahar against the wall. Describing how he slumped to the ground, he went on, "I looked at the right of my chest and saw blood was coming down and I saw a hole in my chest. I knew I had been shot."

As he lay wounded on the floor, a police officer struck him in the face with a gun. He begged, "Please, I can't breathe," but "they just kicked me in the face and kept saying 'Shut the f*** up.' I thought they were going to shoot me again or my brother. I feel ashamed for asking them to spare my life."

He went on, "One of the officers grabbed my left foot and dragged me down the stairs, my head was banging on the stairs."

When he was outside the house, Kahar continued, "I heard them bringing my mum out. She was screaming and crying. I just thought, 'One by one they're going to kill us.' I was just shouting 'I ain't done nothing.' I was worrying about my brothers, everyone. At that time, I thought I was going to die and thinking of everything at the last minute."

Koyair backed up his brother's account. Explaining how he was woken by the sound of shattering glass, he described running into the passage just slightly behind his brother when he heard a loud bang and saw a bright flash.

"It was like a dream at first," Koyair said, "But I realised it was not a dream and my own brother had been shot for no reason. They tried to murder my brother."

"After that I saw the officers hitting my brother," Koyair explained, before he was also arrested and taken to Paddington Green high security prison.

During the press conference, Kahar described how Prime Minister Tony Blair's defence of the raid on his home was "the most hurtful thing." Blair had said he

supported the police action, “101 percent.”

“He said he was 101 percent for the raid,” Kahar said, “101 percent for the hole in my chest.

“I’m the same age as his son—I’m as innocent as his son,” he said.

The brothers’ accounts of events in east London raise disturbing parallels with the police killing of innocent Brazilian immigrant Jean Charles de Menezes in July 2005.

Firstly, just as Kahar’s family was given no warning that those invading their home were police, de Menezes had no way of knowing that the armed men who chased him onto a subway train were plainclothes officers.

Secondly, both incidents were followed by a campaign of slander and misinformation to conceal the criminal actions of the police.

In the case of de Menezes, the police leaked claims to the press that he had been wearing a heavy coat (supposedly to disguise a potential suicide belt or bag of explosives) and had run onto an Underground train, reinforcing the belief that he was a terrorist seeking to evade arrest. All of these claims turned out to be lies.

In the hours and days following the raid on their home, the media claimed that Kahar had been shot in the shoulder after he had struggled with officers. The wound was said to be superficial and not life threatening. Others, apparently quoting police sources, said there was no evidence to suggest officers were responsible for Kahar’s wound, whilst the *News of the World* claimed that he had been shot by his brother during a scuffle with a police officer. When the brothers were released without charge, the story changed again. This time a police officer had “accidentally” discharged his gun as a result of wearing thick gloves.

Not only were these again all lies but, most important of all, it appears that only chance and circumstance prevented Kahar from becoming the second innocent victim of the shoot-to-kill policy adopted in secret by the police two years before the killing of de Menezes. Indeed, according to the *Independent* newspaper, “But for the slope of the staircase” on which Kahar was standing, “the bullet was on target to penetrate the heart.”

As it was, the police bullet went through Kahar’s chest and exited through his shoulder, narrowly missing vital organs.

The police and the media are now anxious to draw a line under the Forest Gate raid. Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Andy Hayman has even somewhat belatedly expressed sorrow for the “hurt” it caused the brothers and their family.

But this changes nothing. The Independent Police Complaints Commission investigation into the killing of Jean Charles de Menezes has not yet been published, and still no one has been held responsible for his death. However, the accounts provided by Kahar and Koyair of the Forest Gate raid indicate that the shoot-to-kill policy remains in force.

Moreover, Blair’s insistence that the police and security services must not be “inhibited” by the damaging fallout from Forest Gate makes clear that whatever apologies are offered, the draconian powers adopted under the guise of the “war on terror” continue to pose a grave threat to the lives and liberties of working people.



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