

Britain: Evidence of fatal police assault at G20 demonstration

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Video footage, photographs and at least five eyewitness accounts have been published over the past several days indicating that Ian Tomlinson, who died during the London G20 demonstrations on April 1, was twice subjected to physical assault by police officers.

Tomlinson, a resident of the City of London, was on his way home after finishing his shift as an *Evening Standard* newspaper vendor when he was attacked twice within the space of a few minutes.

At approximately 7:15 pm, Tomlinson was seen by at least one witness being thrown to the ground by a police officer and hit with a baton in the Cornhill area of the City of London, near the Royal Exchange buildings.

After being assaulted, Tomlinson managed to get up and walked, in a state of shock, a short distance before being caught up in a riot police cordon surrounding protesters near the Bank of England. Video evidence shows that he was violently assaulted from behind by a helmeted and masked riot police officer. He then walked a further 200 feet before collapsing outside the Cooperative Bank building. Tomlinson was later pronounced dead on arrival in hospital.

An investigation into his death was begun by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC).

On the evening of April 7, the *Guardian* released an online video showing Tomlinson being hit from behind with a baton by a riot police officer, who then pushed him violently to the ground. This footage is of the second assault on Tomlinson.

Speaking about the video, the man who shot it on his digital camera said, "I spotted Mr. Tomlinson wandering around Royal Exchange very close to the police line with the dogs, hands in his pockets. He appeared to be only an observer.

"It was then, when Mr. Tomlinson's back was turned to the police line, that a masked riot officer forcibly threw Mr. Tomlinson to the ground from behind. With his hands in his pockets, his ability to break his fall was limited. Although he did get his hands out in time, I believe he hit the top of his head on the pavement. This is all captured on the video."

The video footage can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HECMVdl-9SQ>

The following day, the newspaper published statements from 14 other people, some of whom saw Tomlinson's final movements. This eyewitness testimony directly contradicts that initially put out by the police, who claimed that Tomlinson had died as the result of

a heart attack.

As well as the attacks on Tomlinson, the *Guardian* reported, "witnesses accuse police of lashing at protesters and bystanders alike, attacking them with batons, shields and dogs."

The report continued: "Officers are alleged to have attacked Tomlinson twice; both times from behind and as he was walking away. Eight witnesses produced photographic evidence, time- and date-stamped, that corroborates their version of events. Three said they saw Tomlinson being assaulted by riot police."

Describing the first assault, Anna Branthwaite, a freelance photographer, said that when she first noticed Tomlinson, "A riot police officer had already grabbed him and was pushing him."

She added, "It wasn't just pushing him—he'd rushed him. He went to the floor and he did actually roll. That was quite noticeable. It was the force of the impact. He bounced on the floor. It was a very forceful knocking-down from behind. The officer hit him twice with a baton when he was lying on the floor."

She continued, "So it wasn't just that the officer had pushed him—it became an assault. And then the officer picked him up from the back, continued to walk or charge with him, and threw him. He was running and stumbling. He didn't turn and confront the officer or anything like that."

The *Guardian* has handed the evidence it has compiled to the IPCC.

More video footage shot by a Channel 4 news reporter and shown on the station's news broadcast on Wednesday evening shows the second attack on Tomlinson from a different angle. This material shows the moment the riot police officer hit Tomlinson with his baton before he fell to the ground.

The *Guardian*'s coverage has revealed the extent to which the police, in collusion with the IPCC, sought to "manage" reports of the death in order to prevent a full inquiry. Immediately following Tomlinson's death, an attempted cover-up swung into operation.

It has taken a full seven days after the attacks for the police officer now identified in the *Guardian* footage to come forward to speak to the IPCC. The release of the video footage was itself the result of the police refusing to divulge any relevant information to Tomlinson's family about how he died. The man who took the footage explained, "The primary reason for me coming forward is that it was clear the family weren't getting any answers."

Tomlinson's family have called for the full facts to be established regarding the circumstances leading to his death. Tomlinson's stepson, Paul King, said, "We want answers: Why?

Ian clearly had his arms in his pockets and back towards the police. There is no need for them to step in towards him. It clearly shows that Ian did have an altercation. Now we can say, yes he did. Up until now it has been 'if.' But now we've seen it, we want answers."

The eyewitness evidence exposes the initial statements of the police as lies. As well as attempting to conceal that there had been a physical attack on Tomlinson prior to his collapsing in the street, the police also stated that they had not been in a position to help him as they faced a hail of missiles being thrown by nearby protesters.

These claims are refuted by the eyewitness testimony and photographic and video evidence.

The police version of events was quickly taken up by sections of the media, including several national newspapers and the main daily in London, the *Evening Standard*. The *Daily Mirror* reported in an article on Tomlinson's death that police were "pelted with bottles by a screaming mob," whilst the *Daily Telegraph* claimed that he died "after being caught among the mob." The *Evening Standard* commented the following day that the "police were bombarded with bricks, bottles and planks of wood" as they tried to help Tomlinson, whom they described as a "heart attack victim."

In its article "G20 Assault: How Metropolitan Police Tried to Manage a Death," published Thursday, the *Guardian* reported how those tasked with investigating the death sought to ensure from the beginning that it would clear the police of any involvement.

The article noted, "In the space of five days through a combination of official guidance, strong suggestion and press releases, those responsible for examining the circumstances surrounding Mr. Tomlinson's death within the City of London police and the IPCC appeared to be steering the story to what they thought would be its conclusion: that the newspaper vendor suffered an unprovoked heart attack as he made his way home on the night of the G20 protests."

It reports that the Metropolitan Police delayed by some three hours the report that somebody had died during the police operation that day. There has been no explanation as to why Tomlinson's post-mortem was twice delayed and exactly what its findings were.

According to the *Guardian*, the IPCC explicitly told journalists from other newspapers last Sunday that there was "nothing in the story" that Tomlinson had been assaulted by a police officer.

The *Guardian* states that these evident attempts by the IPCC and the police to suppress the truth were stepped up on the evening the newspaper released the video footage. The article continues, "On Tuesday night when the video of the assault was released, an IPCC investigator and a City of London officer visited the Guardian's offices in King's Cross to be handed a dossier of evidence. They asked that the video [be] removed from the web site, claiming it was 'jeopardising' their inquiry and not helpful to the family."

It was only on April 8, a week after the events and in the face of a growing body of incriminating evidence and the resulting public outcry, that the IPCC were finally forced into calling for an "independent inquiry" into Tomlinson's death. This is to include a second post-mortem.

The sequence of events following the death of Ian Tomlinson is ominously similar to that following the state killing of Jean Charles de Menezes by Metropolitan police officers in London in 2005. In the days following the execution of de Menezes, the police version of events was quickly exposed as a litany of lies and slanders.

Last December, the jury at the inquest into the death of de Menezes rejected police claims that he was lawfully killed and returned an open verdict.

The Jean Charles de Menezes Family Campaign issued a letter on April 9, published in the *Times*, calling for an "urgent independent investigation" into Tomlinson's death. The letter drew the obvious parallels regarding the response of the police to both deaths.

It stated: "The initial picture presented by the police of their integrity at the G20 protest is now crumbling against witness statements and footage to the contrary. With evidence now pointing at a police assault on Mr. Tomlinson, we remember with sadness misleading early accounts of Jean's death and weaknesses in the investigation that undermined future legal processes."

The letter added, "Any claim that lessons have been learnt from Jean's death is now severely under question. Guaranteeing public safety from abuse of police powers requires robust and transparent investigations with criminal proceedings where misconduct has occurred; without this officers are able to act with impunity. A public inquiry is long overdue into this matter."

The *Guardian* has produced an animated graphic showing Tomlinson's final movements, including where the video footage was shot and the location of the eyewitnesses. This can be found at www.guardian.co.uk/uk/interactive/2009/apr/08/g20-police-assault-ian-tomlinson.

The author also suggests:

Britain: Calls for public inquiry into police brutality at G20 summit
[6 April 2009]

Britain: Jury verdict over killing of Jean Charles de Menezes demolishes police lies
[16 December 2009]



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