

Britain: Third autopsy into G20 victim Ian Tomlinson's death

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A third autopsy has been held to establish the cause of the death of Ian Tomlinson, the 47-year-old father of nine who collapsed and died after police attacked protesters at the G20 summit of world leaders in London earlier this month.

It comes after a second autopsy, held at the request of his family, found that Tomlinson died of internal bleeding. That finding contradicted the outcome of the original autopsy, which found that Tomlinson had died of a heart attack.

Tomlinson, a newspaper vendor, was attempting to make his way home after work, when he was caught in a police “kettling” operation—the forcible detention of protestors behind police cordons for up to seven hours.

It was initially claimed that no physical contact had taken place between the police and Tomlinson before his death. But video footage and photographic stills showed that Tomlinson was brutally assaulted from behind by a masked officer, who had struck him across the legs with his asp—an extending steel baton—causing him to fall and hit his head.

In the last days, more evidence has come to light to indicate that this was only the last of *three* separate police assaults on Tomlinson before he collapsed and died.

According to a timetable of events leading up to Tomlinson's death published by the *Telegraph*, the first encounter occurred shortly after 6pm. Tomlinson, who it is claimed appeared to have been drinking, was smoking a cigarette in the road. When a riot van tried and failed to get past him, eye witness Ross Hardy told the newspaper he saw four riot police drag Tomlinson to the pavement.

Some 30 minutes later Tomlinson—who in the meantime had tried to find his way out of the police trap—became stuck in a cordon on the pedestrianised area by the Royal Exchange buildings. Anna Braithwaite, a 36-year-old freelance photographer, says she saw Tomlinson being pushed to the ground by a police officer.

“It wasn't just pushing him—he'd rushed him,” she told the *Telegraph*. “He went to the floor and he did actually roll. That was quite noticeable.

“Ian landed on his left hand side and bounced because of the force of the impact. He looked absolutely terrified.

“The officer hit him twice with a baton when he was lying on the floor. Then the officer picked him up from the back, continued to walk or charge with him, and threw him.”

A “shaken and confused” Tomlinson then tried to find another way out of the cordon, the *Telegraph* account continued.

“Just after 7.20pm, he was seen being closely followed by a line of police—some in riot helmets and others holding German Shepherds on leads.” Tomlinson was walking along with his hands in his pockets when, “[S]uddenly without warning, an officer in a balaclava and helmet appeared to strike Mr Tomlinson on the back of the leg with a baton before shoving him to the ground.

“He fell heavily and rolled onto his back, where he was helped by a couple of protesters.”

After a few minutes, he was helped to his feet by a protestor. Soon, however, he “had to start running as police pushed protesters eastwards along the road, where he finally collapsed near St Michael's Alley at 7.25pm.”

Territorial Support Group

No mention of internal bleeding was made when the results of the first post-mortem, conducted by Dr. Freddy Patel, were published. Patel found that Tomlinson died of a heart attack, but the second post-mortem, carried out by Dr. Nat Cary, states that while “there is evidence of coronary atherosclerosis... its nature and extent is unlikely to have contributed to the cause of death.”

Tomlinson died from an abdominal haemorrhage, Cary's report found, the cause of which “remains to be ascertained”.

The usual cause of abdominal bleeding is trauma. The second autopsy led to the police officer involved being interviewed under caution on suspicion of manslaughter. The third autopsy is at the police officer's request. The outcome was not known at the time of writing.

It has transpired that Patel has previously been reprimanded by the General Medical Council. Speaking to reporters about the death of Roger Sylvester, a 30-year old black male who died in police custody, Patel had said that medical records showed “Mr. Sylvester was a user of crack cocaine.” Sylvester's family protested the suggestion and entered a complaint.

Tomlinson's son Paul King said, “We believe we were badly misled by police about the possible role they played in Ian's death. First we were told that there had been no contact with the police, then we were told that he died of a heart attack. Now we know that

he was violently assaulted by a police officer and died from internal bleeding. As time goes on we hope that the full truth about how Ian died will be made known.”

Tomlinson’s death is currently under investigation by the Independent Police Complaints Commission, which has received more than 180 complaints over police behaviour during protests around the G20 summit.

These include complaints of an assault on 35-year-old female protestor Nicola Fisher (See “Britain: More video evidence of police brutality during G20 protests”). Video footage shows Fisher, who was attempting to join a vigil for Tomlinson following his death the previous day, being struck across her face by a heavily-built police officer, using the back of his hand. When she protests, he draws his asp, strikes her across her legs, felling her to the ground.

Both police officers involved in the assault on Tomlinson and Fisher were members of the quasi-paramilitary Territorial Support Group and had concealed their identification numbers.

The *Times* revealed that the police officer suspended over the assault on Fisher had been reported for an alleged attack on another female the day before. Katie Surridge, a 24-year-old student, said, “One minute I was standing up and the next I was on the floor. I had been pushed to the ground by an officer—I had my back to him and it was totally unprovoked. He didn’t try to justify it at all—initially I was just confused. A group of people shouted at him: ‘You can’t do that to a woman’, but he just walked off.”

In this instance, the officer’s ID was on show and the number recorded by the complainant matches that of the TSG sergeant involved with Fisher.

Journalists assaulted

Organisers of the Climate Camp protest at the G20 on April 1 have handed over a dossier containing hundreds of eye witness statements concerning police brutality to the IPCC. In one incident, caught on video, 24-year-old IT technician Alex Kinnane is struck over the head with a police riot shield.

The National Union of Journalists is also said to be looking into reports of systematic police violence against its members covering the demonstrations.

Video journalist Jason Parkinson told the *Sunday Herald*, to which he is a regular contributor, that he was repeatedly assaulted during the protests.

Describing the police actions during the G20 protests as involving “probably the most brutal violence I have seen since May Day 2000 (when about 150,000 people marched in London during anti-capitalist demonstrations)”, Parkinson told of “indiscriminate attacks on people doing nothing wrong.”

He had been “hit repeatedly” by police. As he tried to film, police staged a baton charge on protestors.

“I pulled my camera out of reach of their batons and started yelling ‘press’ at them. When they missed the camera that’s when about six or seven blows came down on my head from telescopic

batons.” He was concussed for several days as a result.

Parkinson continued, “I saw them punching and kicking journalists. From the very beginning they did nothing but assault the press. Because of the way it has been for the last few years with the Metropolitan Police, everybody who covers these things has a press card clearly visible.”

“I was wearing shin pads because you have to be prepared. I wear a very sturdy helmet. If you are on the front line the first thing they do is start kicking out at you. The baton charge on the press shows how indiscriminate it is.

“The police do not care who you are, you are fair game. It has been worse in the last 18 months to two years.”

Parkinson’s experience was one of several cited by Marc Vallee in the *Guardian*.

Photographer Terence Bunch told Vallee that he had been “pushed violently from behind and thrown to the floor with some force, and then unable to get up due to a wrist injury while a large police rank ran over me causing more injuries to my left leg. It was only the intervention of another photographer who was already behind this rank coming to my aid that allowed me to get out and on to hospital.”

Photographer David Hoffman had also been assaulted by police for taking a photograph, Vallee wrote. These incidents were all evidence of how the government and police were attempting “to criminalise not only those who protest but also those who dare to give the oxygen of publicity to such dissent.”

This is further underscored by the video footage of a City of London police inspector, surrounded by TSG officers, instructing journalists and camera crew to leave the vicinity or face arrest. [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/video/2009/apr/15/g20-protests-police-press>]

Citing section 14 of the Public Order Act 1986, the group of 20 were told to go away for 30 minutes to help police “resolve this situation”—a reference to confrontations with protestors. When the order is queried, the officer tells the reporters that unless they comply they will be put in the cells. When they protest again, he tells them to “shut up”.



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