

# Hundreds attend funeral for Mark Duggan, murdered by UK police

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The funeral of Mark Duggan was held in North London on September 9. Hundreds gathered to pay their respects to the 29-year-old father of four, whose death at the hands of police on August 4 sparked riots in several cities in England.

His coffin was carried around the Broadwater Farm estate to a full church, where a speaker system had been set up for those who had gathered on the street outside. Family members gave emotional tributes to Duggan as a family man and a respected member of the community.

Tensions were high on the eve of the funeral, prompted by a provocative article published by the *Times*, owned by Rupert Murdoch's News International. The article cited anonymous official sources who indicated that the officer who killed Duggan was to be cleared of any wrongdoing on the grounds that he acted on "an honest-held belief that he was in imminent danger of him or his colleagues being shot".

Ballistics tests proved that the bullet found lodged in one officer's radio originated from a weapon fired by one of the officers involved. Police had originally claimed this bullet was fired by Duggan. Another leak in the same article also stated that the gun found in the taxi in which Duggan had been riding before his death did not bear his fingerprints.

The article continued that "the Metropolitan Police are ready to reinstate the officer," who would continue in the firearms unit and would once again carry a gun.

Channel 4 News and others sources subsequently disputed these claims, reporting that the four officers involved have been removed from operational firearms duties and are under investigation. The Metropolitan Police have said the report by the *Times* was wrong.

In light of the many other brazen falsifications by police following the shooting and following many other similar cases in the past—most notably the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes, who was murdered in 2005 by an

armed police unit at Stockwell Tube station—the report in *The Times* cannot be lightly dismissed.

The *London Net* noted that the law is protective of officers who shoot and kill. It reported that the verdict that the *Times* claims is forthcoming is in line with the position lately adopted by courts that a police officer is not guilty of murder or manslaughter if he "was labouring under a mistake as to facts...whether the mistake was, on an objective view, a reasonable mistake or not."

This is a citation to the case of *Beckford v R*, in which a defendant police officer was told that a suspect was armed and dangerous and he shot him. The prosecution argued that the victim was unarmed and presented no threat to the police officer. But the case instead provided the model direction to juries cited by the *London Net*: a killing by an officer is not unlawful if, in the circumstances as the officer perceived them at the time (i.e., as the officer later claims to have perceived them at the time), the officer used reasonable force to defend himself.

Shaun Hall, Duggan's brother, said he had no confidence in the investigation by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). He has called for more witnesses to the killing to come forward, and he has made an appeal for anyone with video footage to make it available to the public.

Hall reported that Mark Duggan's son "was asked by a tabloid reporter if he was part of his dad's same gang.... My 10-year-old nephew as part of a gang? This is just absolutely absurd."

Duggan's family has voiced concerns that the IPCC may be moving to disband a community reference group set up to help with the investigation. The IPCC recently announced a review of the group. The IPCC denied it had any such plans, but said the review would reflect on the "purpose and scope of the group".

The government continues to deny any relationship

between the riots and Duggan's killing and broader questions of social inequality and police brutality. Instead, it insists that "gang culture" is the issue, covering up the deeper problems.

An international summit is to be hosted by Home Secretary Theresa May on how street gangs should be dealt with. Even as it was announced, May admitted that about only 19 percent of those arrested in connection with the riots in London had affiliations to gangs, as opposed to original claims of one third. May added that this figure is likely to keep falling, as she expects more arrests to be made for some time.

When asked what caused the riots, May said it was "very difficult to say" but added she was "very cautious" about making a direct link between the riots and Duggan's killing.

Attorney General Dominic Grieve praised the draconian sentences imposed on youth, adding that the response of the courts to the riots proved that the criminal justice system could be made more efficient. "Processes which would normally take an adjournment of two weeks took 15 minutes," he boasted.

Once again, the Labour Party has stepped up to support the government's law-and-order rhetoric. The Labour MP for Tottenham, David Lammy, said no comparison should be made with previous disturbances after deaths involving the police. He claimed anger was "hijacked" and urged, "We must never, ever allow criminals and gang members to run the streets. The advances in community policing were important, but it needed to go further."

Speaking at the children's charity Barnardo's, Sadiq Khan, the shadow justice secretary, criticised Justice Secretary Ken Clarke for making simplistic assertions when he called the rioters a "feral underclass," but went on to complain, "This kind of language absolves people from responsibility for their actions, implying that somehow they had no self-control or no choice."



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