

UK campaigners against police killings hold demonstration and rally

Our reporters
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The Justice for Christopher Alder campaign held a rally outside the courts in Lowgate in the city of Hull April 5 to mark 16 years since his death.

Christopher died half-clothed on the floor of the custody suite in a Hull police station on April 1, 1998.

A black ex-paratrooper, Christopher had been involved in a fight outside a nightclub in Hull during which he received a blow to the head and was knocked to the ground. By the time the ambulance crew arrived, he was confused and suffering from concussion. He was later discharged from the local hospital to the police, who arrested him for “breach of the peace.”

Video evidence showed police officers standing over Christopher, watching him gasping for breath for 11 minutes whilst they made monkey noises. Despite this, nobody has been held accountable for his death.

The April 5 rally was followed by a march through the city centre and a meeting attended by about 50 people. Some protesters remained in the city centre distributing leaflets and chanting, “No Justice No Peace!”, “Who are the Racists? The police!” and “Who are the Murderers? The police!”

The secretary of the Justice for Christopher Alder campaign said the family and the general public were kept in the dark about the circumstances of Christopher’s death and the fact that his body was held in a mortuary for 12 years. The authorities must have known the full facts. Among those who must have been aware, he said, were two Labour Members of Parliament for Hull, John Prescott Deputy Prime Minister in the Blair Labour government, and Alan Johnson, who went on to become Home Secretary.

Supporting the rally were representatives of the Justice for Christopher Alder campaign, the Justice for Mark Duggan campaign, the Justice for Anthony Grainger Campaign 3/3/12 and the Barton Moss Anti-

Fracking campaign.

Among the speakers were Christopher’s mother Janet Alder, Carole Duggan, the mother of Mark Duggan, whose shooting death at the hands of the police sparked the 2011 riots in the UK, and Wesley Ahmed of the Anthony Grainger campaign.

Ahmed spoke about the circumstances of Anthony Grainger’s death and his fight for those involved to be held accountable. No one has been brought to justice for Grainger’s death on March 3, 2012.

Carole Duggan spoke about the deaths of Cynthia Jarrett, Joy Gardner, and Cherry Groce, women all killed as a result of police brutality. Carole stated that Mark was a popular and respected figure in the Tottenham community and was targeted by the police to provoke a community reaction. She linked these deaths to the development of a police state in Britain.

Janet Alder reinforced other speakers’ assertions that not only were there deaths at the hands of the police, but also the victims and their families were vilified as criminals by the state and the media. Alder added that thousands of people have died at the hands of the police and that no police officer has ever been held accountable.

She stressed that at one time it was mainly black people that were subject to death at the hands of the police, but now it is anybody.

She insisted, “There is no justice” and that her “aim is to expose the corruption of the police and all those involved in the cover-ups.”

A speaker from the Socialist Equality Party linked the state executions to the increasing attacks on democratic rights. She spoke about the importance of the state crimes exposed by WikiLeaks and Julian Assange, Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden. She explained that the state surveillance of families involved in

campaigns against police brutality is part of the use of illegal state surveillance of the entire population.

The deaths are class questions, said the SEP speaker, which can only be ended by the working class taking up these political questions and by building a new workers' party based on a socialist perspective. This is why the SEP in the UK is standing in the European Elections together with its sister party in Germany, the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit, on a socialist programme.

The WSWS spoke to some of those people who came to support the campaign.

Alisha said, "I haven't been involved in the campaign for very long. I am a friend of Janet's and she has raised my awareness of the whole atrocities that have been committed by the police time after time. I have noticed the behaviour of the police and experienced it."

Alisha related the experience of her daughter, who was robbed in the street. When she reported this, she was treated as though she was a criminal. She referred to Janet's discovery that she had buried the wrong body instead of Christopher. "She was given the body of an elderly black lady. If we question this, we are treated like we are the criminals."

Tom, a young man from Hull, said he had come along to support the campaign because he was concerned about deaths in police custody and that nobody was ever held to account. If anybody else did the same thing they would be in prison punished and at least held accountable, which doesn't happen with the police. He added, "These people are supposed to protect us. How can they protect us if when they do wrong they are not punished?"

Chris said, "I came along to support the families of those who have lost family members. It is disgusting that those who are supposed to protect us and keep our streets safe from those who are doing wrong are targeting innocent people."

At the meeting's conclusion Carole Duggan called for all the campaigns fighting for justice to attend the United Friends and Families rally in London on October 25.



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