

Protest in London against police killing of Rashan Charles

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On Monday evening, around 150 people protested the death of Rashan Jermaine Charles, a 20-year-old father of a young daughter. Rashan died last Saturday at the hands of the Metropolitan Police.

The protest began at Stoke Newington police station. A phalanx of police officers stood in front of the entrance and surrounded the rally, with additional officers placed at various street junctions.

At the rally, Rashan's father, Patrick Charles, said, "I'm a father but my son was killed in the hands of police. Me and my family are grieving over this ... We are seeking justice on this, but I want everybody to be peaceful."

The protest marched down Kingsland Road to the convenience store where Charles fled and was brutalized by police.

Protesters refused to leave the area and blocked traffic in both directions for hours. They remained there until the early hours of the morning, before a massive force of police was mobilised to clear the area.

The official account of events, delivered by Chief Superintendent Simon Laurence, borough commander for Hackney, is that officers stopped a car on Kingsland Road, after which Rashan ran off and was chased by police. After entering the shop, Rashan was seen to be trying to swallow an object.

"He was then taken ill," Laurence blithely declared. "He was taken to hospital by the London Ambulance Service where, sadly, he died later that morning ..."

In reality, Rashan was brutally and needlessly assaulted. In CCTV footage, widely shared on social media, a police officer is shown tackling Charles from behind in the convenience store and throwing him to the ground. The officer continues to hold him in a headlock. The officer can be seen rotating his body on the floor while still gripping Rashan tightly around the

neck.

Another man, possibly a plainclothes police officer, is seen to intervene and pin Rashan's legs to the ground with his own legs. While this is taking place, the uniformed police officer handcuffs Rashan's arms behind his back. The uniformed police officer can be seen elbowing Rashan in the head. He is offering no resistance.

Following the incident, paramedics were called and Rashan was taken to Royal London Hospital in East London. He was confirmed dead around an hour later, at 2:55 a.m.

The CCTV footage exposes the lie that police intervened to protect Rashan from "harming himself."

It is already clear from the response of the police and Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) that yet another cover-up of the death of a man in police custody is underway.

The IPCC—which supposedly exists as an "independent" police watchdog, but which has connived in every police murder of a civilian since its formation—is already faithfully disseminating the police version of events.

In its first statement, the IPCC said it was informed by the Met that "at around 1:45 a.m. on Saturday 22 July 2017 officers requested a car travelling in the Kingsland Road/Middleton Road area of Hackney to stop. A passenger in the car, a 20-year-old man, left the scene and was followed on foot by an officer into a nearby shop."

The IPCC statement continues, without explanation, "The man became unwell and first aid was provided by a police officer, police medic and paramedics. The IPCC has obtained evidence which indicates an object was removed from his throat at the scene."

The IPCC report makes no reference to the content of

the CCTV footage, which has been reproduced in articles by the BBC, Sky News, the *Independent* and *Guardian* newspapers. It merely states that “CCTV footage from inside the shop and police body worn video has been gathered and viewed.”

Also speaking at Monday’s protest was Ginario Da Costa, whose son, Edson, died in hospital following brutal treatment by the police. He said, “It’s only one month since my son died. I wanted it to stop before there was a second father like me in my situation. We suffer, but we need to be together and tell police to stop. Whatever kids are doing they do not deserve to have their lives taken. This is not finished.”

Rashan’s death has obvious parallels with that of Edson Da Costa, a 25-year-old father who was expecting his second child.

Edson died in hospital on June 21, just six days after being detained and brutally restrained by police in Beckton, east London. Da Costa was arrested after police stopped the car that he was travelling in with two friends in Tollgate Road at around 10 p.m. on June 15.

According to his father, the police stopped the car as they suspected it had been involved in a robbery. Ginario said that his son told the police he had done nothing wrong and that in the altercation with police, witnesses told him, “He [Edson] fell to the ground and a policeman put a knee on his throat.”

The *Independent* reported that Da Costa’s cousin, Larissa Dos Santos, “claimed a doctor treating him in hospital told families he had injuries including a ruptured bladder, collapsed lungs, and fallen diaphragm and had lost his sight due to damage caused by CS spray.”

The IPCC reported, “During this interaction it is believed police officers used force and deployed CS spray.” As a result, “Mr Da Costa became unwell, first aid was administered, an ambulance was called and he was taken to hospital.”

The IPCC did not report that he was taken to hospital in a critical condition.

The march was held just one day after new figures revealed that from April 2016 to March 2017 six fatal shootings were carried out by the police. This is double the number in 2015-16. The IPCC reported that fatalities in police road traffic incidents rose by 11 to 32. This was the highest in eight years. The vast majority of the deaths (28) were related to police

pursuits of vehicles.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to some of those who attended the protest.

Ali said, “I’ve noticed the intimidation from the police is getting worse every day.”

Another said, “People have to look at the video of this. Why didn’t that police officer tell him [Rashan] to get up? Why was he on top of him? On the last minute of the video he was still. You can see it. He was dead.”

A young woman added, “The police are supposed to use ‘reasonable force’. How are they justifying that as reasonable force? Where was the crime that you can kill someone like that?”

Petra noted, “He wasn’t handled fairly. You could see he wasn’t breathing. When was CPR done? You are supposed to do it in the first three minutes. I’m a first aider and I know this. I study law and the protocol is that if they believe that if a suspect has swallowed something, they have to take him to hospital. They pump his stomach. They then do an x-ray and only if they cannot retrieve a parcel do they take him to a police station where they can hold them for four days until he passes what is inside him. They didn’t do any of that.”

Another protester said that the police were being increasingly brutal to the local community and said it stemmed back to the gentrification of large parts of north and east London ahead of and since the 2012 Olympic Games in the city: “Look at this area here. They are trying to get the poor people out. They didn’t used to care about this area and now they want richer people here, they are doing it up.” Speaking about the Grenfell Tower fire she said, “That is the same. That is an upper class area in Kensington and previously they wanted those people out. They wanted that block pulled down.”



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