

UK's most senior police officer Cressida Dick resigns

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Dame Cressida Dick, Britain's most senior police officer, resigned Thursday, hours after telling journalists she had "absolutely no intention" of quitting. Dick became Metropolitan Police Commissioner in 2017.

Her decision was prompted by Labour Party Mayor of London Sadiq Khan telling her he was "not satisfied" with her plans to address "racism, sexism, homophobia, bullying, discrimination and misogyny in the police force", after a recent scandal involving London officers joking about beating their wives, rape and killing black children.

Dick issued a statement saying "it is clear that the Mayor no longer has sufficient confidence in my leadership to continue. He has left me no choice but to step aside".

Khan has pulled the trigger following a build-up of discontent in the ruling class with the Commissioner's performance. Dick was an utterly loyal and merciless servant of the British state, who in 2005 led the operation which assassinated an innocent man Jean Charles de Menezes in the aftermath of the July 21 London bombings. She instituted armed foot patrols, was a staunch defender of stop and search and the use of facial recognition systems and led mass arrests of Extinction Rebellion climate protesters.

She was also incompetent and a walking public relations disaster. There were very few crises confronted by the Met which she failed to inflame.

Her time in charge was epitomised following the murder of Sarah Everard last March by serving Met police officer Wayne Couzens, nicknamed "the rapist" by his colleagues. The Met responded by suggesting women stopped by plainclothes police officers should challenge them and consider "waving down a bus" if they didn't feel safe.

A vigil held for Everard on Clapham Common was brutally broken up by a police mob, just an hour after

Prince William's wife Kate Middleton had laid flowers at the site in an attempt to ease tensions.

Three months later, Dick was personally censured for obstruction in a report into the 1987 murder of Daniel Morgan, which uncovered a cesspit of police corruption. The case was possibly connected with that of Stephen Lawrence, killed in a racist murder in 1993 effectively covered up by the Met. Dick closed the case in August 2020, with three of the killers still at large. In 2012, she had shut down the work of Clive Driscoll who had brought two of the murderers to justice.

Each incident has further eroded the tarnished reputation of the Metropolitan Police, a key pillar of the British state, earning Dick the enmity of most of the political establishment.

Nazir Afzal, a former chief prosecutor at the Crown Prosecution Service, is quoted in the *i* newspaper as saying Dick's career was marked by a "catalogue of blunders." The paper explains Afzal "has spent three decades trying to restore confidence in law and order after allegations of corruption involving several high-profile miscarriages of justice and in the aftermath of Stephen Lawrence's murder. He argued last month that Dame Cressida was 'undoing all that painstaking work'."

The *Daily Mail* wrote, "By any reasonable measure, her tenure has been a catastrophic failure. She has overseen cover-ups, displayed incompetence and has entrenched public despair and distrust."

Even the BBC reported, "The career of Cressida Dick has seen her weather a number of storms that would have sunk many others. Allegations relating to an unholy trinity of dishonesty, prejudice and incompetence dogged the Met for almost all of her tenure."

Much of the commentary has pointed to Dick's failure to tackle racism and misogyny in the police as the reason for her departure and asks whether her replacement can address "deep-seated cultural issues." This is all so much

blather. While they would doubtless prefer a less frequently embarrassing operation, few of these commentators are under any illusions about the type of people entrusted with the task of cracking down on protest and the consequences of poverty and social inequality.

The real concerns animating the clamour against the former commissioner were summed up by the *Guardian*'s Marina Hyde. Also referring to the "partygate" scandal gripping Prime Minister Boris Johnson's premiership, she wrote that there is something "increasingly dangerous about ordinary people thinking: 'If I behaved like the prime minister or those police officers, I'd be sacked.' Trust is the very hardest thing to get back, and trust in the police and in politicians is demonstrably nosediving."

Hyde's comment echoes Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer's invocation of Margaret Thatcher against Johnson last week: "The first duty of Government is to uphold the law. If it tries to bob and weave and duck around that duty when its inconvenient, if government does that, then so will the governed."

As the Socialist Equality Party explained, "Preventing opposition from developing among 'the governed' is the overriding political imperative of" both Labour and the Tories. The same applies to the Met.

Under conditions in which the UK is helping to spearhead the US war-drive against Russia in Europe and heading into the worst collapse in living standards in recent memory amid an uncontrolled pandemic, the growing feeling in media and political circles was that Dick was not up to the job. The brief for her successor was most bluntly set out in the *Daily Mail*, whose editorial yesterday demanded, "Needed—a no-nonsense cop to arrest decline".

Those tipped to replace her show what can be expected. The frontrunner, although considered out of favour in Downing Street, is Neil Basu, until recently the head of counter-terror policing. He came to public prominence in 2019 by threatening journalists who publish leaked information with criminal charges.

After UK ambassador to the US Sir Kim Darroch's frank assessments of the Trump administration were published in the *Mail on Sunday*, Basu warned that Counter Terrorism Command would investigate alleged breaches of the Official Secrets Act, telling the leaker, "Turn yourself in at the earliest opportunity, explain yourself and face the consequences."

He also threatened journalists, "The publication of leaked communications, knowing the damage they have caused or are likely to cause may also be a criminal

matter.

"I would advise all owners, editors and publishers of social and mainstream media not to publish leaked government documents that may already be in their possession, or which may be offered to them, and to turn them over to the police or give them back to their rightful owner, Her Majesty's Government."

The *Mail* describes Basu as "well-liked within the force and by intelligence officials at MI5."

Two other possible replacements, Matt Jukes and Mark Rowley, have also served as head of the counter-terrorism unit. Rowley is a frequent contributor to the Tory think-tank, the Policy Exchange. Another candidate, Martin Hewitt, is a former army lieutenant.

Simon Byrne, Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, is described by the *Guardian* as the "shock and awe candidate". He caused controversy in 2019 for posting "a Christmas Day message" on Twitter with a photo of him standing next to machine-gun-wielding officers outside a heavily fortified police station in County Armagh, Northern Ireland.

The final decision on the appointment will be made by Home Secretary Priti Patel, who will be looking for someone to enforce her Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill criminalising protest and regime of savage deportations. The *Mail* reports sources saying she could "go abroad for candidates with the senior Tory known to have been scouring Australia for a no-nonsense police chief."

As exemplified in the crisis facing the government and now the Met, facing a social explosion the capitalist state is making use of a series of scandals in its upper echelons to prepare for major confrontations with the working class.



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