

# Demonstrations continue to protest UK police killing of Chris Kaba

Paul Bond  
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Demonstrations took place nationwide on Saturday demanding a homicide investigation into the police killing of an unarmed man, Chris Kaba. The 24-year-old father-to-be was killed with a single shot to the head by a Metropolitan Police (MPS) officer in south London a fortnight ago.

More than 1,000 people protested outside the Met's HQ, New Scotland Yard, with demonstrations also taking place in Manchester, Cardiff, Brighton, Southampton and elsewhere.

Kaba was a rapper who went by the stage name Madix or Mad Itch, and part of the drill group 67. He was due to be married in five months. His fiancée is expecting their child.

On the evening of September 5, an Automatic Number Plate Recognition camera linked the car he was driving in Streatham, south London, to a firearms incident some days previously. A police chase was launched, and the car was stopped on Kirkstall Gardens with “tactical contact”—rammed and boxed in.

Witnesses reported hearing armed police shouting “Get out of the car,” before a single shot was fired through the windscreen, hitting Kaba in the head. One witness told press the car was “immobile” when the shot was fired. Police claim Kaba was driving at them.

CPR was administered, but Kaba was pronounced dead in hospital the next day. According to INQUEST, a charity providing expertise on state-related deaths, 78 people have died as a result of police shootings since 1990. Among these were the August 2011 shooting of Mark Duggan in London, which triggered days of riots in the capital and other major cities.

Kaba's family and the Justice for Chris Kaba campaign have issued four demands: a homicide investigation by the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC); suspension of the officer responsible

for the shooting; release of the body-cam footage to the family; and that the IOPC share a timeline for the investigation with them.

The campaign demands are a recognition of previous police delaying tactics. Kaba's family said, “We do not want any delay as has happened in other fatal shootings—otherwise we and the wider public can have no confidence that the police will be held to account.”

The IOPC has confirmed that “no non-police issue firearm” was found either in the car or at the scene. It took longer for them to confirm that the vehicle was not registered to Kaba, which raises the further question of whether they knew it was Kaba driving or not.

Only on September 9, following the post mortem, did the IOPC launch a homicide and disciplinary investigation. However, the firearms officer involved remained in post and was not suspended until September 12, a week after the killing, despite being subject to criminal investigation.

The suspension of the officer involved triggered a backlash from police. A firearms command source told the *Telegraph* that officers are threatening to hand in their weapons, calling the suspension a decision to “placate public anger, pure and simple.”

The IOPC has now announced a “wide-ranging” investigation into “all of the circumstances surrounding Mr Kaba's death,” including how the officers came to be aware of his vehicle, whether they had prior knowledge of him, their decision-making and actions, and “whether or not Mr Kaba's race influenced any actions taken by the police.” The police have also agreed that the family can see the footage from the night of the killing,

Everything indicates a closing of ranks by the Met. MPS Assistant Commissioner Amanda Pearson spelled it out explicitly, saying she “absolutely understands that

this shooting is a matter of grave concern, particularly for our Black communities.” However, she was concerned for firearms officers, with their “difficult and often dangerous” job: “I don’t underestimate the impact on them of this development.”

An MPS statement repeated this line, emphasising that “the decision to suspend the officer does not determine the outcome of the IOPC investigation.”

The family has demanded a speedy and thorough investigation to a clear timeline, but the ignominious record of public inquiries and investigations provides clear evidence of the tactics that will be deployed. The IOPC have already said, “As this is now a criminal investigation, we are limited in what further information we can provide.”

The scenario of the police killing, followed by protracted, inconclusive or unjust outcomes, is all too familiar. This has fuelled widespread and growing anger at Chris Kaba’s killing, and popular sympathy.

Among the speakers at Saturday’s protest, for example, was Marcia Rigg, whose brother Sean died in police custody in 2008. It took four years before an inquest ruled against the police over his death. The four officers involved were not publicly disciplined.

Speaking from the platform, grime artist Stormzy recognised the war of attrition designed to silence the voices of victims and their families: “when these people do these things, they get away with it, because what happens is... they know we get tired. What they’ve done is they’ve killed someone. We can’t sugarcoat it.”

Other speakers included local Labour MP Bell Ribeiro-Addy and her political mentors, Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott.

The Corbynites are playing a conscious role in upholding and defending the bourgeois state, attempting to carefully manage opposition in the working class to the police. Corbyn warned the ruling class Saturday that Kaba’s killing raises questions about the style and form of police in urban areas. Some policing leads to a great sense of anger and injustice.” He called for that to be turned into “a positive demand,” urging “a much higher degree of accountability to bring security and safety to our communities.”

This is consistent with the line of the Police Federation, which simultaneously supported the call for

family access to body-cam footage while declaring, “Officers should not be thrown to the wolves.”

Corbyn added that the demonstrations should continue only “until the interview [of the firearms officer] takes place under caution.”

Meanwhile the Corbynites will attempt to restrict opposition to definite channels. Ribeiro-Addy spoke to praise Kaba’s family for having obtained an IOPC investigation into whether racism had been a factor in the killing, as “that’s not been the case in other investigations, so it’s quite key that the family have been able to secure that.”

Racism plays a role in police violence and killings, but its influence will be focussed on by Corbyn, Abbott et al to the deliberate exclusion of the fundamental factor of class and the role of the police as an arm of the capitalist state.

The killing of Chris Kaba has highlighted the brutality of the society which the death and funeral of Queen Elizabeth II has been used to glorify.

Sky News initially reported the first protest march as a display of mourning for the queen, and had to issue a correction: “We apologise for a mistake made earlier today which accidentally misidentified aerial pictures of a protest march for Chris Kaba as a large gathering paying tribute to Queen Elizabeth II.”

At the time Sky’s Sarah-Jane Mee, who was anchoring the station’s coverage, said of helicopter footage of the crowd of thousands of people moving through Trafalgar Square to oppose Kaba’s death, “Look at that, look at the crowds of people winding their way down... they’ll be working their way up the Mall, and what a walk there is.

“There are thousands of people lining that route, it really is an incredible sight. They’ll work their way up the Mall, very slowly, meeting new friends along the way, talking about their journey here, their memories of the Queen, their good wishes for the new King.”

The government has refused to issue any statement on the case at all, saying this would “not be appropriate” during the period of national mourning.



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