

UK police officer who killed Chris Kaba charged with murder, Home Secretary declares “support” for firearms officers

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Chris Kaba was killed by a Metropolitan Police firearms officer in London with a single shot to the head around 10pm on September 5, 2022. He was unarmed.

A rapper who went by the stage name Madix or Mad Itch, Kaba was part of the drill group 67. He was soon to be married to his pregnant fiancée. His killing sparked protests against the police in London and other cities, including Manchester, Cardiff, Brighton and Southampton.

The officer who shot him, identified as NX121, was formally charged with murder by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) on Thursday.

NX121 was granted anonymity in an interim order by District Judge Nina Tempia, banning publication of any details or description that could lead to his identification. This order is due for review next Friday at the Central Criminal Court. He remains suspended, has been granted conditional bail, and must remain at a named address, surrender his passport, and cannot apply for international travel documents.

The charge has prompted fellow firearms officers and the Conservative government to rally round in NX121’s defence.

According to the Met, “a number of officers” have decided to “step back from armed duties while they consider their position”. The numbers doing so are unprecedented: more than 100 police officers handed in their permits to carry firearms, according to the BBC.

The *Telegraph* reported, “Counter-terrorism specialists are among a growing number of Met officers who have handed in their weapons in the backlash over one of their colleagues being charged with murder...” It went on, “It is understood the Met has asked other forces for support, but armed officers from elsewhere are refusing to fill their gaps in solidarity with their London-based colleagues.”

Giving the government’s stamp of approval to this reactionary protest, Home Secretary Suella Braverman announced a review of armed policing on Sunday—not to

stop the murder of unarmed civilians, but to give the police “confidence”.

Armed officers, she said, “mustn’t fear ending up in the dock for carrying out their duties. Officers risking their lives to keep us safe have my full backing and I will do everything in my power to support them. That’s why I have launched a review to ensure they have the confidence to do their jobs while protecting us all.”

Just this January, Met firearms officer David Carrick pled guilty to 49 sex offences, including 24 of rape while serving as a police officer. Multiple complaints for abusive and violent behaviour were lodged against him throughout his career, with no effect. In July 2021, another firearms officer, Wayne Couzens, pled guilty to the rape and murder of Sarah Everard.

On Sunday evening the BBC reported that the Ministry of Defence had “received a request—known as Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA)—from the Home Office to ‘provide routine counter-terrorism contingency support to the Metropolitan Police, should it be needed,’” allowing soldiers to fill the roles of firearms officers. MACA requests were also used last year to mobilise soldiers in strikebreaking operations against border staff and paramedics.

Kaba was killed after a police Automatic Number Plate Recognition camera linked the Audi car he was driving—which did not belong to him—to a firearms incident the previous day. A police chase was launched, with Kaba being followed by an unmarked police car without lights or sirens. He turned into Kirkstall Gardens in Streatham Hill, where his car was stopped with “tactical contact” from another marked police vehicle, which rammed him and boxed him in.

Witnesses said they heard police shout “Get out of the car” before a single shot was fired through the windscreen, hitting Kaba in the head. Police had claimed that Kaba was driving at them, but a witness said the car was “immobile”

when the shot was fired. CPR was administered, but Kaba was pronounced dead in hospital the following day.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) quickly confirmed that “no non-police issue firearm” was found in the car or elsewhere at the scene, although it took longer for them to confirm that the car was not registered to Kaba. Only on September 9, after the post mortem, did the IOPC launch a homicide and disciplinary investigation. The firearms officer involved was not suspended from duty until September 12, a full week after the killing, although he was already under criminal investigation.

Kaba’s family and the Justice for Chris Kaba campaign issued four immediate demands. They called for the officer’s suspension, an IOPC homicide investigation, release of the body-cam footage to the family, and for the IOPC to share their investigation timeline with them.

“We do not want any delay as has happened in other fatal shootings,” they explained, “otherwise we and the wider public can have no confidence that the police will be held to account.”

That concern was justified. According to INQUEST, a charity providing expertise on state-related deaths, 80 people have died as a result of police shootings since 1990, and there have been 1,871 deaths in or following police custody or contact over the same period.

There has only been one successful prosecution of an officer for manslaughter, in the case of former footballer Dalian Atkinson. There has been no successful prosecution of any officer for murder. Ten murder/manslaughter charges following deaths have been brought without a successful prosecution.

Even with the Kaba family’s close scrutiny of the police response, the process has been agonisingly slow. The IOPC announced in March this year that its homicide investigation was complete and that the file had been passed to the CPS to consider potential criminal charges.

There was little evidence of progress, however. On September 9 this year, a year after the killing, the family held a peaceful protest at the Met’s headquarters, New Scotland Yard, to demand answers and justice.

In a statement, the family denounced the “lack of urgency,” saying, “We believe that it was possible within six months of Chris being killed both for the IOPC to complete a well-resourced and effective criminal investigation and for the CPS to provide us with a charging decision.” They described it as “unbelievable” that after a year they had still not received any answers, and said the CPS had “failed” them by not completing its task “urgently or in a timely fashion.”

The slow progress continues. The plea and trial preparation has been listed for December 1, with a possible

trial date suggested of September 9, 2024—two years after Chris Kaba’s killing.

Solicitor Daniel Machover of Hickman & Rose, representing the family, said he was “appalled that, after the IOPC took almost seven months to complete its investigation, the CPS has failed to complete its task within a further five months.”

He drew attention to the different treatment given to police officers. “In what other comparable suspected homicide case involving firearms discharged by a civilian does the CPS consider it appropriate to take so long to make a charging decision?”

“CPS decision-making when police officers are suspects is too slow and cumbersome. It is also worth pointing out that, just as many of the IOPC’s most serious criminal investigations of police officers remain under-resourced and far too slow.”

Before NX121 was finally charged, Deborah Coles, director of INQUEST, called it “unacceptable” that there had not yet been a charging decision. She noted that “Delay, denial and defensiveness is institutionalised within the investigative system and shows how police officers are treated differently than civilians.”

Now that charges have finally been brought, the state’s response is defiant, with Braverman aiming to turn the event into an opportunity to give the police yet more impunity, and to involve the army in policing. She made her comments on the Kaba case on the same day as issuing yet another attack on the European Court of Human Rights.

Two years ago, the government enacted the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Bill, authorising covert police and security operatives to commit serious crimes, including murder. The Labour Party was whipped to abstain at several key moments in the bill’s passage through Parliament and the Lords.

While Director of Public Prosecution, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer approved the decision not to prosecute any police officers involved in the fatal shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005, and tried to prevent the prosecution of Simon Harwood, who brutally beat Ian Tomlinson, a passer-by, to the floor in 2009 during an anti-G20 protest in London. Tomlinson died of an internal bleed shortly afterwards.



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