

# Pro-Zionist campaign ousts West Midlands Police chief who banned Maccabi thugs from UK football match

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**20 January 2026**

The right-wing campaign following West Midlands Police's (WMP) decision to ban Maccabi Tel Aviv football fans from attending a fixture in Birmingham, England last November has resulted in the forced retirement of its chief constable Craig Guildford.

Guildford retired with immediate effect last Friday, two days after Labour government Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said she had lost confidence in him. The manufactured "scandal" is another effort to conflate opposition to Zionism, especially its most fascistic supporters, with antisemitism.

West Midlands Police took the decision to ban Maccabi Tel Aviv fans—notorious for their core of Zionist thugs who have close ties to the Israel Defence Forces—from attending a Europa League fixture with Aston Villa held on November 6. In doing so, the police backed Birmingham City Council's Safety Advisory Group (SAG) decision to allocate no tickets to the Israeli team.

All evidence shows that the SAG and police took the correct decision in light of the risks posed to the local Muslim population. Birmingham is home to more than 300,000 Muslims, many of whom have protested Israel's genocide of the Palestinians.

During their rampage in Amsterdam, a year prior, Maccabi's hooligans tore up Palestinian flags, hit taxis driven by Arabic drivers with crowbars, and chanted pro-genocide slogans. These included, "There are no schools in Gaza because there are no children left," "F\*ck Palestine," "IDF [Israel Defense Forces] f\*ck the Arabs," and "Death to Arabs! We will win."

WMP faced enormous pressure from pro-Zionist forces to have the decision overturned, including an intervention on October 16—more than three weeks

before the match—by Prime Minister Keir Starmer who perversely claimed that it was the Maccabi supporters who should feel unsafe in Birmingham! "We will not tolerate antisemitism on our streets. The role of the police is to ensure all football fans can enjoy the game, without fear of violence or intimidation," he stated.

A witch-hunt has been ongoing ever since. Guildford stepped down after the publication on January 14 of the preliminary findings of an investigation by HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Andy Cooke, into WMP's handling of the Maccabi fixture. The investigation was commissioned by Mahmood on October 31, again, before the match went ahead.

Cooke criticised in his report, "I note that WMP spoke only to Dutch police. It appears that the force didn't speak to policing counterparts in other jurisdictions where Maccabi Tel Aviv had more recently played European fixtures." But it was in Amsterdam that Maccabi fans' behaviour required the presence of up to 2,000 police—why on earth would this *not* be the focus of inquiries?

Cooke goes to extraordinary lengths to downplay the significance of these events, essentially making light of anti-Muslim hatred and violence.

Countering the WMP's warning that "The day before the [Ajax] fixture saw approximately 500–600 Maccabi fans apparently intentionally targeting Muslim communities", he answers: "There is evidence that Maccabi Tel Aviv fans targeted Muslims and pro-Palestinians, but they targeted individuals rather than residential communities."

As for references to "serious assaults on Muslim taxi drivers," writes Cooke, "One of the official Dutch reports contains a reference to a single report of an

assault on one taxi driver. Other taxi cars and motor scooters were attacked and damaged, but it is unclear if they were occupied at the time.”

About the “tearing down [of] Palestine flags”, he responds: “The Dutch police told us one Palestinian flag had been pulled down. In official Dutch reports, there are three recorded incidents involving flags.”

Even an injury to a police officer is understated by the former Chief Constable of Merseyside Police. Of the WMP’s claim that “Several [Dutch police] officers were injured during the sustained confrontation”, Cooke demurs that it was just one officer who had “sustained hearing loss during the disorder.”

He concludes, “I am of the opinion that in its written communication, WMP portrayed the level of disorder at that fixture, and the part played by Maccabi Tel Aviv supporters, as greater than it really was.”

The contrast between this minimisation of real crimes and the slandering of the peaceful demonstrations of millions against the genocide in Gaza—which have been branded violent hate marches—is revolting.

Cooke was extending a campaign of lies began immediately after the scenes in Amsterdam, with the BBC portraying the Maccabi fans largely as innocent bystanders who were themselves attacked.

The broadcaster used footage of Maccabi thugs carrying out assaults alongside a clip of a Maccabi supporter saying, “Suddenly a lot of people come to attack us. A lot of people, like 100, maybe more, with belts and sticks and rocks. They took everything that they can to beat Israeli Jews.”

So grotesquely false was this presentation that the broadcaster was forced to apologise, but only after 41 days—once the coverage had played its part in a hysterical press campaign that even accused Amsterdammers of organizing pogroms against Jews—and “proving” how irrational the police had been to ban the Maccabi supporters. The correction was announced on December 23 to minimise the viewership.

Cooke’s report also threw in the red herring that part of WMP’s research included an AI hallucinated claim that “The most recent match Maccabi Tel Aviv played in the UK was against West Ham United in the UEFA Europa Conference League group stage on 9th November 2023”. No such fixture took place. This obviously had no bearing whatsoever on the many well-documented acts of violence.

In fact, just days after WMP made their decision, police *in Tel Aviv* cancelled a local derby match between Maccabi and rivals Hapoel after fans rioted outside and inside their shared Bloomfield Stadium.

The very day Cooke issued his report, amid Mahmood’s demands that Guildford step down, Maccabi supporters were filmed attacking Palestinians in Jaffa. The New Arab website reported, “Footage posted to social media showed Maccabi fans, dressed in the team’s colours, throwing objects at the owner and staff at a Palestinian-owned car wash. The fans can be heard chanting “Death to Arabs”.

Starmer declared in his campaign for the Labour leadership that he was a “Zionist, without qualification”. It is no surprise that the Home Affairs Committee which grilled WMP is similarly aligned.

The Canary website noted that when its members were “asked to declare any relevant interests, almost every committee member—including the chair—had to admit to being a ‘Friends of Israel’ member. Of the two who didn’t say they were, one had accepted a donation from LibDem Friends of Israel and the other chairs parliament’s ‘all-party’ group on ‘antisemitism’”.

The campaign to remove the WMP chief has served an additional end, deepening the politicisation of the police force. As she called for Guildford’s sacking, Mahmood announced new laws to be passed that “will hand Home Secretaries statutory powers to force the retirement, resignation or suspension of chief constables on performance grounds.”

This is a shift to the right beyond previous Conservative governments. In 2011, the Tories passed the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 under which only police and crime commissioners have the power to dismiss a chief constable.



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