# Prosecutors accused of hampering police during Southport riots



Prosecutors have been accused of hampering police efforts during the riots in Southport, following the tragic murders of three individuals, by allowing misinformation to proliferate. MPs from the Home Affairs Select Committee indicated that a lack of consistent, clear guidance from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) placed police in a "very difficult position", as they were prevented from disclosing vital information regarding the religion of the suspected killer, Axel Rudakubana.

The chaotic events unfolded after the murders occurred during a Taylor Swift-themed dance class on July 29. A report due for publication on April 14 details how violence erupted, fuelled by erroneous claims on social media that Rudakubana was a Muslim illegal immigrant, which amassed over 30 million impressions online. The resultant turmoil saw 246 protests, counter-protests, and incidents of disorder nationwide, culminating in 1,804 arrests and 1,072 criminal charges.

The MPs’ report highlighted the "regrettable" and "inconsistent advice" that emanated from the CPS, which ultimately hindered law enforcement's ability to manage the situation effectively. "The inconsistent advice from the CPS over the publication of information about the suspect’s religion was particularly regrettable and hampered the police response," the MPs noted.

Committee chairman, Dame Karen Bradley, emphasised the need for the criminal justice system to adapt its communication strategies to better suit the challenges posed by the prevalence of social media. She stated, "the criminal justice system will need to ensure its approach to communication is fit for the social media age."

Interestingly, the committee's findings dismissed allegations of "two-tier policing" in the handling of the unrest by Merseyside officers, led by Chief Constable Serena Kennedy. The MPs asserted that the level of policing was proportionate to the behaviours observed, clarifying that those involved in violence were not subjected to harsher police treatment based on political beliefs, but rather due to actions such as throwing missiles, assaulting officers, and committing arson. Chief Constable BJ Harrington, the national police operations lead, expressed approval for the report's findings, firmly disagreeing with the notion of two-tier policing.

In response to the chaos and the challenges faced in managing public communication after the riots, a Home Office spokesperson acknowledged the strain placed on established communication principles due to social media's influence. They confirmed that the Law Commission has been tasked with reviewing the rules surrounding Contempt of Court, signalling a move towards addressing the ramifications of misinformation in such critical situations.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2024_Southport_stabbings> - This URL supports the claim about the tragic murders at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport. It details the attack on July 29, 2024, by Axel Rudakubana, who killed three children and injured ten others.
* <https://www.cps.gov.uk/mersey-cheshire/news/teenager-who-murdered-three-children-southport-dance-class-pleads-guilty> - This URL corroborates Axel Rudakubana's guilty plea for murder and attempted murder. It highlights the CPS's role in handling the case and provides context about the perpetrator's actions.
* <https://www.cps.gov.uk/mersey-cheshire/news/teenager-jailed-killing-three-children-dance-class-and-trying-kill-ten> - This URL provides further details about Axel Rudakubana's sentencing and conviction. It aligns with information about the attack and its impact.
* <https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/> - Although this URL does not specifically address the content of the article, it relates to the general activities of the Home Affairs Select Committee, which is mentioned in relation to the report on handling misinformation during the Southport riots.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/law-commission> - This URL is relevant to the Home Office's action in involving the Law Commission to review Contempt of Court rules amid concerns about misinformation and social media.