# Merseyside Police’s ethnic disclosure in Liverpool attack sparks debate over transparency and risks



The decision by Merseyside Police to disclose the ethnicity of the suspect in the recent Liverpool parade collision has ignited a significant debate regarding transparency and the potential repercussions of such disclosures. Following the incident on 26 May 2025, during which a vehicle drove into a crowd celebrating Liverpool F.C.'s Premier League triumph, a 53-year-old white British man was arrested. The collision left 47 individuals injured, including four children, with four in critical condition. In an effort to combat rampant misinformation circulating on social media — some platforms immediately branded the incident a terrorist attack — police released details about the suspect's ethnicity two hours post-event.

Former superintendent Dal Babu, who previously served in the Metropolitan Police, articulated his concerns regarding this unprecedented move. He highlighted that while it was critical to address the misinformation that has historically exacerbated community tensions, such as that witnessed following the Southport murders last summer, this action could create future challenges for law enforcement. Babu cautioned that far-right groups may exploit these disclosures, prompting the police to release inconsistent details based on the ethnic backgrounds of suspects. He stated, “It doesn’t take rocket science to predict what will happen… it will present some difficulties and challenges to the police.”

The Southport incident saw a rapid spread of disinformation, leading to riots and confrontations with police, a situation exacerbated by the erroneous belief that the perpetrator was a Muslim asylum seeker. Indeed, Merseyside Police had faced criticism for their lack of transparency during that episode, highlighting the precarious balance law enforcement must strike between informing the public and maintaining order. Some officers expressed trepidation that future disclosures might incite similar unrest, particularly if a suspect's ethnic background could be politicised or misrepresented.

The police claimed that their decision to release the suspect's ethnicity this time was regarded as necessary to ensure accurate information was disseminated swiftly. However, it is acknowledged that each case is distinct and should be evaluated individually, as not all circumstances warrant such disclosures. A senior legal source hinted at the potential backlash police might face if they were to arrest a suspect with a Muslim name or of a certain ethnic background under similar circumstances, stating that this might lead to riots rather than quell unrest.

Following Merseyside Police Chief Constable Serena Kennedy's misfortune in the Southport case, where she sought to publicly clarify the suspect's religion to combat speculation but was advised against it, the recent decision represents a precautionary yet controversial shift in policing strategy. Jonathan Hall KC, the official reviewer of terrorism legislation, asserted that the learning from past events should promote transparency moving forward, stating, "The authorities seemed to have learned the lessons of Southport... Transparency is the right precedent."

In suggesting that future disclosures are vital, Hall's comments reflect a growing consensus that timely and factual information may be necessary to prevent misinformation from taking root. Nick Lowles, from the monitoring group Hope Not Hate, echoed this sentiment, noting that “what they did this time was to fill the void, putting information out as soon as possible.”

As discussions surrounding these policies evolve, Prime Minister Keir Starmer indicated that while he recognises the potential need for such disclosures, it would ultimately be a matter for the police to determine, emphasising that attention should remain on the well-being of those affected by the incident.

The ramifications of this decision are yet to be fully realised, but the cautious optimism surrounding more transparent police communications could signify a critical shift in how law enforcement interacts with the communities they serve, especially in the digital age marked by rampant misinformation.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges), [[3]](https://time.com/7288755/liverpool-car-ramming-dozens-injured-explainer/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges)
* Paragraph 3 – [[4]](https://hyphenonline.com/2025/02/25/axel-rudakubana-not-muslim-merseyside-police-serena-kennedy-cps/), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2025-02-25/police-boss-wanted-to-release-southport-killers-religion-to-stop-disinformation), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/article/2024/jul/31/three-arrested-over-southport-riots)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges), [[3]](https://time.com/7288755/liverpool-car-ramming-dozens-injured-explainer/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges), [[7]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/crime/southport-attack-riots-far-right-social-media-b2588628.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges)
* Paragraph 7 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges), [[5]](https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2025-02-25/police-boss-wanted-to-release-southport-killers-religion-to-stop-disinformation)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges), [[3]](https://time.com/7288755/liverpool-car-ramming-dozens-injured-explainer/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/may/27/police-naming-liverpool-parade-suspects-ethnicity-may-cause-future-challenges> - Merseyside Police's decision to disclose the ethnicity of a suspect in the Liverpool parade collision has sparked debate. Former superintendent Dal Babu expressed concerns that this unprecedented move could lead to future challenges, particularly from far-right groups exploiting such information. While acknowledging the correctness of the decision to counteract misinformation, Babu cautioned that each case should be evaluated individually to prevent potential misuse.
3. <https://time.com/7288755/liverpool-car-ramming-dozens-injured-explainer/> - On May 26, 2025, a vehicle rammed into a crowd in downtown Liverpool during celebrations of Liverpool F.C.'s English Premier League victory. The incident injured 47 people, including four children, with four individuals reported to be in critical condition. A 53-year-old white British man was arrested, and authorities stated the incident is not being treated as terrorism. The swift response of emergency services prevented the spread of misinformation, contrasting with previous incidents where delays led to unrest.
4. <https://hyphenonline.com/2025/02/25/axel-rudakubana-not-muslim-merseyside-police-serena-kennedy-cps/> - Following the Southport murders, misinformation about the suspect's identity, including false claims about his religion, spread online. Merseyside Police Chief Constable Serena Kennedy sought to dispel these inaccuracies by releasing information about the suspect's religion but was advised against it by local Crown Prosecution Service officials. This decision highlights the challenges law enforcement faces in balancing transparency with potential public unrest.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/granada/2025-02-25/police-boss-wanted-to-release-southport-killers-religion-to-stop-disinformation> - Merseyside Police Chief Constable Serena Kennedy wanted to release information about the Southport attacker's religion to counteract misinformation but was advised against it by local Crown Prosecution Service officials. This decision underscores the complexities law enforcement faces in managing public information to prevent unrest while ensuring justice.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/article/2024/jul/31/three-arrested-over-southport-riots> - Following the Southport murders, misinformation about the suspect's identity led to riots, with 53 police officers injured. False claims about the attacker's identity, including that he was an asylum seeker, spread rapidly on social media, inciting violence and unrest in the community.
7. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/crime/southport-attack-riots-far-right-social-media-b2588628.html> - Misinformation about the Southport attacker's identity, including false claims that he was a Muslim migrant, led to riots and clashes with police. The spread of these falsehoods on social media platforms by right-wing accounts with large followings incited violence and unrest in the community.