# Retired Kent policeman awarded £20,000 after wrongful social media arrest highlights policing flaws



A retired policeman, Julian Foulkes, has been awarded £20,000 in compensation following a wrongful arrest associated with a social media post that questioned rising anti-Semitism in the UK. The incident, which occurred in November 2023, unfolded with Foulkes being apprehended at his home in Gillingham by a substantial force of six officers from Kent Police. This was particularly poignant given that Foulkes had dedicated a decade of his life to the very force that now detained him.

The situation arose against a backdrop of heightened tensions following the onset of the Israel-Hamas conflict, which had sparked widespread protests, some notably marred by anti-Semitic incidents, including an alarming takeover of a Russian airport by a mob linked to these demonstrations. In light of these events, Foulkes tweeted a critical observation directed at a pro-Palestine activist, stating: "One step away from storming Heathrow looking for Jewish arrivals…" This tweet, misconstrued as anti-Jewish sentiment, led to his handcuffing outside his home—a scene that involved officers equipped with batons and pepper spray.

Following the arrest, Foulkes was subjected to a lengthy detention, during which officers reportedly made comments regarding his collection of books, describing them as "very Brexity." After a policed review, the Kent force acknowledged that this caution was a misinterpretation of Foulkes' intentions, ultimately removing it from his record. Chief Constable Tim Smith extended his apologies in a letter to Foulkes, reiterating the distress caused by the officers' actions.

Foulkes expressed a sense of relief upon receiving the financial settlement but emphasised that his pursuit was not motivated by monetary gain; rather, it was a quest for justice and accountability. Speaking to The Telegraph, he stated: “For me, it was a simple matter of right and wrong. I now need to see that the full investigation I have been promised takes place and necessary actions are taken to prevent any recurrence.” His decision to speak out stems from a belief that the police's response reflects a broader issue of misinterpretation surrounding social media commentary, signalling an Orwellian trajectory in policing free speech.

The implications of this case reach further, echoing concerns within police forces about wrongful arrests and their consequences. Kent Police, like many others in the UK, has faced scrutiny over its handling of similar incidents. Recent findings illustrate a troubling trend, with UK police forces paying out over £105 million in compensation claims over five years, predominantly for wrongful arrests and negligence. Figures from various reports highlight that the Metropolitan Police alone contributed nearly 66% of this total.

Foulkes' case shines a light on the vital need for police reform and improved understanding of social media contexts. Kent Police's recent history includes settlements involving racial discrimination claims, revealing systemic issues within the force that require addressing. With Foulkes' victory, advocacy groups, such as the Free Speech Union, continue to call for greater accountability and transparency in how law enforcement navigates the complexities of public discourse in an increasingly digital age.

As Foulkes ponders the future and the commitments made by the police, he stands as a reminder of the imperative to safeguard individual rights against the encroaching ramifications of misinterpretation and overreach, underscoring the delicate balance between national security and freedom of expression.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769159/Retired-policeman-wrongly-arrested-thought-crime-wins-payout.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769159/Retired-policeman-wrongly-arrested-thought-crime-wins-payout.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[2]](https://www.kent.police.uk/rqo/request/comp/request-compensation-from-police/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/22/julian-cole-police-officers-face-dismissal-over-incident-in-which-student-was-paralysed), [[4]](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-68111491)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/kent-police-racism-race-racial-discrimination-aggravated-damages-british-asian-constable-payout-angus-bowler-black-lives-matter-employment-tribunal-industrial-tribunal-kent-police-ordered-to-pay-aggravated-a7180161.html), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/dec/26/uk-police-out-of-court-settlements-total-30m-in-four-years), [[7]](https://bylinetimes.com/2023/04/21/revealed-uk-police-forces-pay-out-millions-in-compensation-claims-in-past-five-years/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14769159/Retired-policeman-wrongly-arrested-thought-crime-wins-payout.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.kent.police.uk/rqo/request/comp/request-compensation-from-police/> - Kent Police provides guidance on how individuals can request compensation for unlawful actions by the police. The page outlines situations where compensation may be applicable, such as lost or damaged property, forced entry, road traffic collisions, and wrongful arrest. It details the application process, including the necessary information to include in a claim and the steps Kent Police will take to investigate and resolve the claim. The page also addresses the possibility of legal proceedings if a claim cannot be resolved without court action.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/oct/22/julian-cole-police-officers-face-dismissal-over-incident-in-which-student-was-paralysed> - The Guardian reports on the case of Julian Cole, a 19-year-old student who suffered a life-changing injury after being restrained and arrested by police. The article details how three officers were found to have lied about Cole's condition during the incident, leading to their dismissal. Despite the misconduct, no criminal charges were brought against the officers. The piece highlights the family's pursuit of justice and the ongoing efforts to uncover the truth behind Cole's injuries.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-68111491> - BBC News covers the settlement of a £1.2 million claim between the family of Julian Cole and Bedfordshire Police. The article explains that Cole, who was left paralysed after a scuffle outside a nightclub in 2013, received the compensation after the police officers involved were found to have lied about the incident. The settlement was approved by the High Court, with the police force not admitting liability. The piece also includes statements from the police chief expressing regret over the incident.
5. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/uk/home-news/kent-police-racism-race-racial-discrimination-aggravated-damages-british-asian-constable-payout-angus-bowler-black-lives-matter-employment-tribunal-industrial-tribunal-kent-police-ordered-to-pay-aggravated-a7180161.html> - The Independent reports on a case where Kent Police was ordered to pay £20,822 in compensation and £5,165 in aggravated damages to a British Asian constable, Angus Bowler, who experienced racial discrimination and victimisation. The article details the tribunal's findings, including the police force's lack of action following the initial judgment and the late apology from the Chief Constable. It also discusses the broader context of racial discrimination within the police force and the Black Lives Matter movement.
6. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/dec/26/uk-police-out-of-court-settlements-total-30m-in-four-years> - The Guardian reports on the total of £30 million paid out by UK police forces in out-of-court settlements over four years. The article provides a breakdown of the settlements, highlighting the Metropolitan Police's significant contribution of £19.6 million. It discusses the types of claims settled, including wrongful arrest and negligence, and the implications for police accountability. The piece also mentions the varying approaches of different police forces towards handling compensation claims.
7. <https://bylinetimes.com/2023/04/21/revealed-uk-police-forces-pay-out-millions-in-compensation-claims-in-past-five-years/> - Byline Times reveals that UK police forces paid out £105 million in compensation claims over five years. The article details the types of claims, including public and employer liability, and the forces with the highest payouts. It discusses the implications for police accountability and the need for reform. The piece also highlights the lack of transparency and the varying approaches of different police forces in handling compensation claims.