# LGBTQ+ community rallies for justice in Heklina's death investigation



In a significant demonstration held in London, more than 100 supporters, including prominent drag artists and LGBTQ+ activists, gathered to protest the Metropolitan Police's handling of the investigation into the death of beloved American drag performer Heklina. Heklina, born Steven Grygelko, was found dead in a flat in Soho on 3 April 2023, while in the UK as part of a tour. The discovery was made by Peaches Christ, a close friend and fellow performer, just days after they had completed a series of shows in London.

The circumstances surrounding Heklina’s death remain unclear, and the Metropolitan Police have classified it as unexpected, with a continued investigation in collaboration with the coroner. However, friends and supporters have voiced concerns regarding alleged delays and inadequate communication from the police, suggesting an institutional bias that they argue may stem from homophobia.

Speaking at the rally, Cheddar Gorgeous, a Manchester drag queen and star of RuPaul’s Drag Race UK, expressed the outrage of the community about the perceived mishandling of the case. “The continued insensitive and incompetent handling of Heklina's death by the Metropolitan Police is a stark reminder of the way assumptions, born of prejudice, continue to cloud police inquiry in the UK,” Cheddar stated.

Among the demonstrators were fellow Manchester drag artists Anna Phylactic and Liquorice Black, alongside notable figures such as Ana Matronic from the Scissor Sisters and Crystal, another Drag Race UK contestant. The rally began outside the iconic Big Ben and concluded at the New Scotland Yard, with participants voicing their demand for accountability through chants and placards carrying messages such as "Justice for Heklina" and "End Met police homophobia now."

Peaches Christ, who has been vocal about her grief and frustration over the police response, emphasised during her speech, “For nearly two years, myself and Heklina's next of kin have been ignored. Only when I went to the media was there a response.” She added, “Queer people deserve to be treated fairly and equally and we demand change.”

The protest coincided with a resurgence of scrutiny towards the Metropolitan Police's past failures, including an inquiry into their handling of the Stephen Port case—an investigation into a serial killer linked to four young men's deaths in East London. Crystal pointed out the need for systemic change, drawing parallels between the George Floyd case and the complacency surrounding Heklina's death, stating, “Are our lives worth less? One of us has died. Our institutions shrugged and moved on.”

Urban development and cultural venues in Manchester have also been part of Heklina’s legacy, as she co-founded the legendary drag night Trannyshack in San Francisco and had frequent performances in the UK. The event concluded without immediate resolutions but highlighted the ongoing issues faced by the LGBTQ+ community regarding safety and police accountability.

In response to the outcry, Detective Chief Superintendent Christina Jessah commented that the Metropolitan Police acknowledges the frustrations concerning the investigation. She indicated that a review is underway to assess any missed opportunities and reaffirmed the commitment to thoroughly examine all lines of inquiry regarding Heklina's death. The Metropolitan Police have also made apologies to Heklina's family and friends for any distress caused during the investigation process.

The protests extended beyond London, with simultaneous actions occurring in San Francisco, emphasising Heklina’s significance within both the local and international drag communities, as her death continues to evoke strong calls for justice and accountability.

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

## References

* <https://www.sfchronicle.com/entertainment/article/heklina-death-new-details-20236001.php> - This article provides details about Heklina's death and the ongoing investigation by London's Metropolitan Police, including concerns about delays and potential biases in the police handling.
* <https://www.sfgate.com/local/article/san-francisco-drag-legend-heklina-cause-of-death-20244675.php> - The article discusses the cause of death, mentioning a lethal amount of drugs found in Heklina's system, and criticizes the slow pace of the investigation, highlighting the concerns of Heklina's friends and family.
* <https://www.thechronicleherald.ca/lifestyles/local-lifestyles/queer-community-rallies-for-justice-over-heklina-death-1082614/> - This article explores the international repercussions of Heklina's death, focusing on protests and community calls for justice and police accountability.
* <https://www.pinknews.co.uk/2023/04/homophobic-police-investigations-stephen-port-heklina/> - Pink News discusses the parallels drawn between Heklina's case and past controversies involving the Metropolitan Police, such as the Stephen Port case, highlighting institutional issues.
* <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-64514528> - BBC News covers the protests and demands for accountability from the LGBTQ+ community following Heklina's death, mirroring broader concerns about police handling.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/heklina-death-london-police-protest-b2323426.html> - The Independent reports on the protests outside New Scotland Yard and the frustrations of Heklina's loved ones with the police investigation's progress and transparency.