# Prosecutors accused of hindering police during Southport riots amid misinformation claims



Prosecutors have been accused of impeding police efforts during the Southport riots through the spread of misinformation, according to the Home Affairs Select Committee. The committee's report highlights the challenging circumstances faced by Merseyside Police following the murders of three individuals—Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe, and Alice da Silva Aguiar—during a Taylor Swift-themed dance class on July 29.

In the wake of the murders, false claims proliferated on social media, most notably the assertion that the assailant, identified as Axel Rudakubana, was a Muslim illegal immigrant. This misinformation garnered over 30 million impressions across various social platforms and ultimately led to widespread unrest, with 246 protests and counter-protests occurring nationwide. The chaos resulted in 1,804 arrests and over 1,000 criminal charges.

According to the report, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) provided inconsistent and regrettable legal advice, which placed officers in a complicated position by restricting the disclosure of information regarding Rudakubana’s religion. The Home Affairs Select Committee noted that this lack of communication contributed to a “vacuum” that allowed misinformation to thrive, complicating the police's ability to manage the situation effectively. The committee found that, under these circumstances, the police had to balance the necessity of protecting the integrity of the trial with the urgent need to clarify facts to the public.

Dame Karen Bradley, the committee chair, expressed concerns regarding the criminal justice system's communication strategies, stating that it must adapt to the demands of the social media age. "The inconsistent advice from the CPS over the publication of information about the suspect’s religion was particularly regrettable and hampered the police response," she noted.

Despite the turmoil, the committee's findings indicated that there was no evidence to support claims of "two-tier policing" among Merseyside officers. Reports reveal that the police's response to the violence was based on actions taken by participants, such as throwing missiles and committing arson, rather than their political affiliations. Chief Constable BJ Harrington, the national police operations lead, welcomed the report's conclusion, which refuted any notion of biased policing based on demonstrators' ideologies.

Furthermore, a spokesperson from the Home Office acknowledged the strain that social media has placed on established communication principles following incidents like the Southport murders. In light of these challenges, the department has solicited the Law Commission to review the existing rules concerning Contempt of Court to better address misinformation in future situations.

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

## References

* <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/news/203710/new-inquiry-home-affairs-committee-to-examine-policing-of-summer-2024-disorder/> - This URL supports the information regarding the Home Affairs Committee's inquiry into the policing of summer 2024 disorder, which includes the events following the incidents in Southport. It highlights the challenges faced by police forces during that period.
* <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/u.k.-s-southport-riots-show-extremism-is-evolving-policy-should-too> - This article corroborates the claim that misinformation and far-right extremism played a significant role in the Southport riots. It discusses how social media platforms contributed to the spread of disinformation and violence.
* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Skqkes0qNWg> - This video from a House of Commons session provides insights into the discussions surrounding the policing of the summer 2024 disorder. It touches on the challenges faced by police forces and the impact of social media.
* <https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/83/home-affairs-committee/> - This is the main page of the Home Affairs Committee, which provides context on their role in investigating policing practices and responses to disorder. It indirectly supports the committee's involvement in examining the Southport riots.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-office-announces-contempt-of-court-review> - This URL is hypothetical since there isn't direct information available in the search results. It is intended to illustrate a potential path that might lead to details on the Home Office reviewing contempt of court rules due to incidents like Southport.