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Top prosecutor rejects calls for deeper inquiry into police spies

Activists are pressing for a proper inquiry into the secret role of police spies in trials

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Wed 7 Dec 2011 18.28 GMT

The first of the major inquiries into the [Mark Kennedy](#) affair reported this week but the controversy shows no sign of abating.

Sir Christopher Rose, a retired High Court judge, reported that both [senior prosecutors and police were responsible for failing to disclose](#) crucial evidence to environmental activists who were being prosecuted over a protest. That evidence - [surveillance tapes recorded by Kennedy](#) - would have cleared the activists.

Keir Starmer, the Director of Public Prosecutions, must have been relieved by the conclusions of the report, but many activists are left dissatisfied.

The DPP was keen to highlight the report's verdict that the failure to disclose the evidence was not "deliberate, still less dishonest".

In essence, Rose found that the failure was the fault of a few individuals, and was not systemic. He was only commissioned by the DPP to look at this one case.

This has not mollified activists who are critical of the legal establishment which they believe is seeking to limit the controversy to one case and a fall-guy.

Dan Glass, one of the Ratcliffe defendants, said, "The [Ratcliffe case](#) was one of the most sophisticated policing operations in recent history involving a four-month investigation culminating in the largest pre-emptive arrest in British legal history. For this report to claim that when the question of disclosure arose, every time, every person associated with the case suddenly became incompetent, but institutionally everything is fine is totally absurd. This report can be added to the great litany of British judicial whitewashes."

They point to other cases in which the involvement of undercover police officers has allegedly been kept secret. They want a more comprehensive inquiry to get to the bottom of these allegations. They want to know if other people have been convicted in trials corrupted by the hidden involvement of police spies.

It is a demand repeatedly rebuffed by Starmer this week. As he toured the television studios, Starmer came under some pressure to justify that stance.

On Newsnight, Starmer was asked if he "was confident that there are no other cases of this kind". The DPP argued that a wider inquiry is not needed and would not be a justifiable use of public money as the verdict from Rose did not point to systemic failures.

He has adopted a passive stance, pleading that he is prepared to look at particular allegations if they brought to his door by solicitors and other members of the public.

According to the DPP, the number of "big" prosecutions involving undercover policeman is "probably around half-a-dozen a year".

Presumably he is referring to all cases involving, for instance, drug gangs and other serious crime, and not just trials of political campaigners. Perhaps not?



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