

Church of England calls for Stephen Lawrence smear claims inquiry

Anglicans demand independent inquiry and say smear claims threaten to undermine confidence in police anti-racism efforts



📷 Stephen Lawrence's mother, Doreen, Lawrence, flanked by solicitor Imran Khan, left, and her son, Stuart, last month. Photograph: Oli Scarff/Getty Images

Sam Jones

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The Church of England has called for a full, open and independent investigation into [allegations that undercover police officers hunted for information to smear the family of Stephen Lawrence](#) and bugged meetings between the murdered black teenager's friend Duwayne Brooks and his lawyer.

In a strongly worded statement, the church's Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) said the claims, reported by the Guardian, threatened to undermine public confidence in the police's integrity and commitment to tackling racism.

"If true, the allegations that have emerged in recent days would show beyond doubt that we are not just hearing the revelation that some police

officers behaved appallingly to the family and friends of a murder victim 20 years ago," it said.

"In the light of what has been alleged, many people are now concluding that significant numbers of police officers, including some at senior level, knew of and approved of what was happening. The belief that this was not just a few bad apples but a rottenness at the core of UK policing needs to be tested by a full, open and independent investigation, now."

Were it to emerge that a cohort of officers had engaged in a "prolonged cover-up", said the committee, "we would be forced to conclude that a conspiracy of silence has continued until 2013 to prevent the full truth from emerging".

It said the allegations also chimed with the experiences of many black and ethnic minority Anglicans who believe institutional racism remained a "sickening reality". The wholly disproportionate use of stop-and-search against young black people, added the committee, served only to damage confidence in the police.

The church said it applauded the police's efforts to build respect and trust through neighbourhood policing programmes: "However, we are now presented with serious allegations that our police services remain tainted by the presence, across the ranks, of those who are prepared to collude, right up to the present day, in a cover-up of massive proportions."

It also offered the police its help and experience in addressing racism, adding it was ready to assist "in the process of discovery, admission of fault, penitence and commitment to finding a new and better future".

Last week [Doreen Lawrence](#) met the Metropolitan police commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, to discuss the allegations. She said her confidence in the police had been shaken by the revelations made to the Guardian by Peter Francis, a former undercover officer.

["Over the years we look at how many things have changed and how people are beginning to respond to things," she said. "Now, it's like taking a couple of steps back. It will take a while to gain back trust again."](#)

The claims are being examined by two existing inquiries. Operation Herne, the police inquiry led by the chief constable of Derbyshire, Mick Creedon, is investigating the activities of undercover officers, while Mark Ellison QC is probing allegations of corruption in the original investigation into the murder.

However, [David Cameron has said he is considering widening the scope of both investigations in the light of Doreen Lawrence's call for a public judicial inquiry.](#)

It was [reported over the weekend that the archbishop of York, John Sentamu, believed he was bugged and subjected to surveillance by the police while he served as an adviser to Sir William Macpherson, whose landmark](#)

report into Lawrence's murder described the police as institutionally racist.
The archbishop declined to comment on the matter.



