

Doreen Lawrence

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Doreen Lawrence: 'It will take time to regain trust in police'

Mother of murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence meets UK's top policeman to discuss claims officers wanted to smear her family

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The mother of the murdered teenager [Stephen Lawrence](#) has said it will "take a while to gain back trust" after she met Britain's most senior policeman to discuss claims that undercover officers hunted for information to smear her family.

[Doreen Lawrence](#) visited New Scotland Yard to speak to the Metropolitan police commissioner, [Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe](#), and obtain answers to 13 questions following allegations made in the Guardian by Peter Francis, a former undercover officer, that he was [asked to find dirt on the family after the murder in 1993](#).

Speaking outside Scotland Yard after the meeting, Lawrence said: "Over the years we look at how many things have changed and how people are beginning to respond to things. Now, it's like taking a couple of steps back. It will take a while to gain back trust again."

Flanked by her solicitor, Imran Khan, she said she had received some answers to her questions from Hogan-Howe but it was "early days yet ...we only heard about this last week".

She said she was not placing blame on the current chief of the Met as there were three commissioners before him from whom she wanted to obtain answers, "especially the commissioner who was in charge at that time, when this allegation happened".

"He's a new person so I think my questions, even though he's now in charge, it has to go back to those other commissioners."

She added: "It is going to take some time to build that trust up again. I think that people at times felt that they were beginning to - we had the public inquiry, we've had so many things that happened over the years." This new revelation had destroyed some of that trust in the police and the authorities.

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In a statement after the meeting, Hogan-Howe said it had been a constructive meeting. "These are serious allegations and I understand why the Lawrence family want answers quickly. I am determined for Operation Herne to establish the facts as quickly as possible for an operation of this size," he said.

Operation Herne is the long-running review into use of undercover officers by the special demonstration squad.

Speaking on Thursday morning, Hogan-Howe said he would try to answer some of the questions that Lawrence's lawyer Khan had put forward, but insisted it was not for him to call for a public inquiry.

He said: "We can see if we can answer those questions. We can tell her what we're doing.

"At the end of the day all I have to offer is a police inquiry. Whether or not the government or parliament is persuaded by that, I can't really say any more than I have said already."

He said it was within the powers of the Independent **Police** Complaints Commission to take over the Operation Herne inquiry being led by the chief constable of Derbyshire, Mick Creedon.

Lawrence met Theresa May at the Home Office on Thursday morning to urge her to hold a full investigation in public.

May said earlier this week that the claims could be examined by two existing inquiries: Operation Herne, the police investigation into the activities of undercover officers, and another led by Mark Ellison QC into allegations of corruption in the original investigation into the murder.

Lawrence **said after that meeting**: "She said all options are open and she explained about the different reviews that are going on at the moment and how it could be expanded.

"I made my point quite clear - for the past 20 years we as a family have been talking about corruption and we have undercover officers trying to smear our family. I want answers. I want to know who was the senior officer who signed that off."

Hogan-Howe told members of the police and crime committee in **London** that he also hoped to meet the women who had given birth to children as a result of relationships with undercover officers in the past.

He said: "My heart is for trying to meet these women at some point ... there is not a large group of them."

He revealed that he had asked the head of serious crime, the assistant

commissioner, Mark Rowley, to carry out a review of all ongoing undercover operations within the **Metropolitan police** and the national domestic extremism unit - now within the control of his force - as a result of the latest allegations.

It is the second review of ongoing undercover operations to be carried out since he took over as commissioner.

Allegations that Duwayne Brooks, who was with Stephen Lawrence when he was murdered, was bugged during meetings with his lawyer and police officers around 1999-2000 are also being examined by Creedon, whose inquiry involves a review and investigation of the use of undercover officers by the Met police's former Special Demonstration Squad. The SDS was set up in 1968 and dissolved in 2008.

The commissioner said he had asked Creedon to prioritise the Lawrence claims. He said: "What they are looking at is 40 years of material. I have already asked the chief constable of Derbyshire to prioritise the particular allegations about the targeting of the Lawrence family."

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