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Met chief has not watched Stephen Lawrence family 'smears' documentary

Bernard Hogan-Howe has not seen programme alleging police smear campaign against Stephen Lawrence's friends and family



📹 Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, who told LBC 97.3 radio on Tuesday morning that if the allegations were proved true, it would be unacceptable. Photograph: Lewis Whyld/PA

Alexandra Topping

Tue 25 Jun 2013 10.58 BST

The Metropolitan police commissioner has said he has not yet watched the Guardian and Channel 4 Dispatches documentary that alleges [undercover police officers were ordered to find information to smear the family of Stephen Lawrence](#) following his murder.

Sir [Bernard Hogan-Howe](#) told LBC 97.3 radio on Tuesday morning that if the allegations were proved true, it would be unacceptable.

He said he had been briefed on the content of the programme but had not seen it. "I have to admit, I haven't seen the full programme yet. I've seen bits of it, like everyone else has, but I couldn't see it last night," he said.

"We had been warned in the runup to that about some of the allegations in it. It was played out last night. We weren't given a pre-look at it and it just

wasn't physically possible for me to look at it last night."

He added: "If the family were targeted just to discredit them, if they were targeted to target the campaign, that can never be acceptable."

Hogan-Howe said procedures had been improved and the work done by undercover officers was necessary. "They go out there and they target serious organised crime, they target the terrorists. This is a vital part of our armoury," he said.

He said he was confident that officers were no longer assuming the identities of dead children or fathering children with women in groups they infiltrated.

Hogan-Howe said the Met was not complaining about the resurfacing of historic allegations, and officers just had to "get on with it".

He said he understood calls from Stephen Lawrence's father, Neville, for a judge-led inquiry into the allegations, after the home secretary, Theresa May, said two ongoing inquiries into the activities of undercover officers would examine the claims.

"If you do have a public inquiry it can take a long time and it's not always conclusive," the Met commissioner said. "It still has to come back to the police or Independent Police Complaints Commission to prosecute, if you want a criminal prosecution or misconduct procedure, it has to come back to the police. We will support a public inquiry; but pragmatically it's not always satisfying."

Hogan-Howe's comments come after a police officer who spent four years living undercover in protest groups told the Guardian that he participated in an operation to spy on and attempt to smear Lawrence's family, the friend who witnessed his fatal stabbing and campaigners frustrated at the police's failure to bring his racist killers to justice.

On Monday May told MPs the claims would be considered by the inquiry into the undercover operations of the Special Demonstration Squad in London in the 1980s and 1990s, being led by Derbyshire's chief constable, Mick Creedon, under the oversight of the IPCC, as well as the investigation into alleged police corruption in the original Lawrence inquiry, carried out by Mark Ellison QC.

Addressing the House of Commons, she offered her support for the Lawrence family. "They experienced an unspeakable tragedy, their pain was compounded by the many years in which justice was not done, and these latest allegations - still coming 20 years after Stephen's murder - only add to their suffering," she said.

"I am determined that we should have zero tolerance of police corruption and wrongdoing ... and I am determined that we get to the bottom of all of these latest allegations."

The prime minister, David Cameron, also called for an immediate investigation, saying he was deeply concerned about the allegations. He said the government would "get the full truth out".

But Neville Lawrence said May's statement was completely unsatisfactory. In a statement issued from his home in Jamaica, he said: "I understand that the home secretary has announced that she will extend the inquiries of Mark Ellison QC and Operation Herne. I would like to make it clear that I find this completely unsatisfactory.

"I am convinced that nothing short of a judge-led public inquiry will suffice and I have no confidence that the measures announced today will get to the bottom of this matter."



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