

Stephen Lawrence

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Stephen Lawrence: Cameron deeply concerned by smear campaign claim

PM calls for investigation into claims undercover police officer was part of operation to smear family of murdered teenager

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David Cameron has called for an immediate investigation into claims that a former undercover police officer was part of an [operation to smear the family of Stephen Lawrence](#), saying he is deeply concerned about the allegations.

Labour has also called for an urgent inquiry after a police officer who spent four years living undercover in protest groups told the Guardian he participated in an operation to spy on and attempt to smear the family of the murdered teenager, the friend who witnessed his fatal stabbing and campaigners frustrated at the police's failure to bring his killers to justice.

A No 10 spokesman said: "The prime minister is deeply concerned by reports that the police wanted to smear Stephen Lawrence's family and would like the [Metropolitan police](#) to investigate immediately."

He said any future inquiry into allegations of an attempt to smear Lawrence's relatives would require the confidence of not just the public but also the family. He said questions needed to be answered urgently. Speaking in advance of a statement to MPs by the home secretary, Theresa May, he pointed to the two existing inquiries into aspects of the case. He highlighted the inquiry into undercover police operations set up in 2011 and led by the chief constable of Derbyshire police, Mick Creedon, saying this had an independent element due to the involvement of the Independent [Police](#) Complaints Commission (IPCC).

He also made reference to the inquiry by Mark Ellison QC into the way the Metropolitan police investigated itself over the Lawrence murder.

The former home secretary Jack Straw said he was calling for the IPCC to look into the matter immediately, and the revelations had to take priority over the current inquiry into undercover policing.

"I am appalled by these revelations, which go to the heart and ethics of the police service, or the lack of both," [he told BBC Radio 4's Today programme](#). "I am now going to refer these allegations to the IPCC. These are really serious allegations. We need to know who ordered this, how far up it went and why not a word of any of this was disclosed in any form either to me, the home secretary, or to the Macpherson inquiry."

The former practices of undercover police officers are the subject of an [investigation called Operation Herne](#), which is being overseen by Creedon.

A Met spokesman said: "Operation Herne is a live investigation, four strands of which are being supervised by the Independent Police Complaints Commission, and it would be inappropriate to pre-judge its findings."

But Straw said: "My sense is these allegations are so serious and of a different order than those that relate to other undercover officers. The IPCC have to prioritise. That there ought to be a full-scale investigation by the IPCC I am in no doubt."

Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary, called the allegations "shocking and appalling", and also called for an inquiry.

"We have long known that the Metropolitan police investigation into Stephen Lawrence's murder in 1993 failed badly and reflected racism within elements of the police at the time. There have also been concerns that corruption within the investigation was never fully pursued," she said. "These are very serious new claims about the conduct of the police at the time, and it is vital we get to the truth about what happened."

The police who had secured the prosecution earlier this year of two men for Lawrence's murder had done important work, but the new revelations could not be ignored, she said. "These allegations, even though they relate to 20 years ago, are shocking and will be very upsetting for Stephen Lawrence's family and friends. Victims need to be able to have full confidence in the vital work the police do each day to keep them safe and get them justice."

Peter Francis, a former undercover police officer turned whistleblower, said his superiors wanted him to find "dirt" that could be used against members of the Lawrence family in the period shortly after the racist murder in April 1993.

He also said senior officers deliberately chose to withhold his role spying on the Lawrence campaign from Sir William Macpherson, who headed a public inquiry to examine the police investigation into the death.

"I had to get any information on what was happening in the Stephen Lawrence campaign," Francis said. "They wanted the campaign to stop. It was felt it was going to turn into an elephant. Throughout my deployment there was almost



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