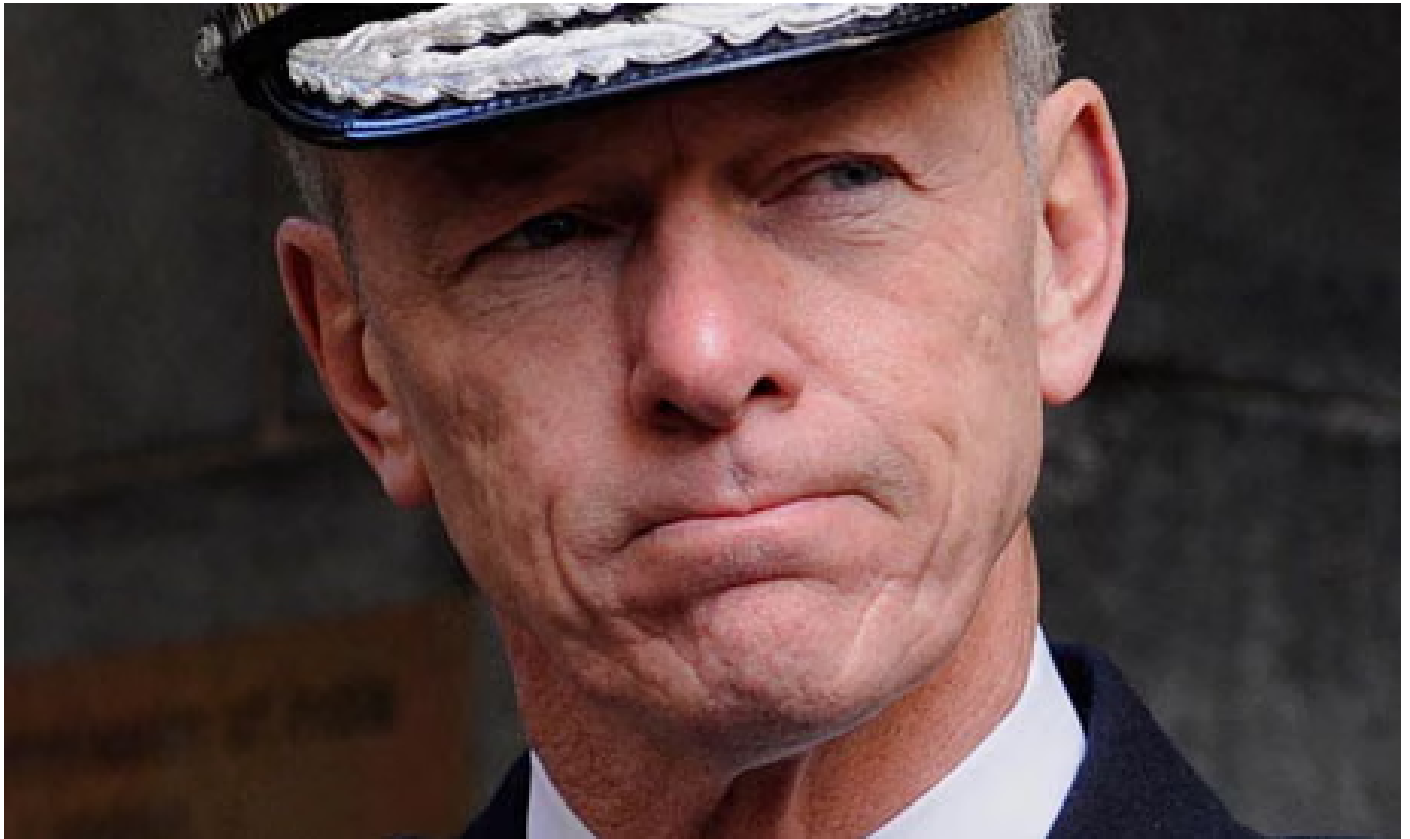


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# Stephen Lawrence family smear claims 'worthy of public inquiry'

Met chief Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe says he understands calls from Stephen Lawrence's father for a judge-led inquiry



📷 Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe said that if claims police tried to smear Stephen Lawrence's family were proved, it would be unacceptable. Photograph: Rebecca Naden/PA

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## Alexandra Topping

Tue 25 Jun 2013 14.50 BST

The [Metropolitan police](#) commissioner has said he would support a public inquiry into claims that undercover officers were told to find information to smear the family of the murdered teenager Stephen Lawrence, as first revealed by the Guardian.

Sir [Bernard Hogan-Howe](#) said, however, that the process could be lengthy and inconclusive.

"If you do have a public inquiry, it can take a long time and it's not always conclusive at the end of it. Secondly, if there is more wrongdoing discovered, it still has to come back to the police or to the IPCC [Independent [Police Complaints Commission](#)] to investigate and prosecute," he told the LBC radio station.

"A public inquiry can decide who did what, but if you want to get into a criminal prosecution or a misconduct process, it still has to fall back to the police. You might end up having two parallel things. I'm content that the investigation has to continue to establish the facts, and if the government or parliament decides that it would prefer a public inquiry, then of course we would support that."

Hogan-Howe admitted on the show that he had not seen the Guardian and Channel 4 Dispatches documentary that put forward the allegations, but a spokeswoman for the Met said that after his appearance on LBC he did watch it at Scotland Yard.

Hogan-Howe said on Tuesday morning that if the allegations were proved true, it would be unacceptable. "If the family were targeted just to discredit them, if they were targeted to target the campaign, that can never be acceptable." In a [statement](#) he added: "It is frustrating [...] that we are not in an immediate position to give the Lawrence family, Duwayne Brooks and the public the answers they deserve."

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 historical allegations, and that 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.

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 investigation into alleged police corruption in the original Lawrence inquiry, carried out by Mark Ellison QC, and the inquiry into the undercover operations of the Special Demonstration Squad in [London](#) in the 1980s and 1990s led by Derbyshire's chief constable, Mick Creedon, under the oversight of the IPCC.

Addressing the House of Commons, she offered her support to 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".

Neville Lawrence, however, said that May's reaction 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."

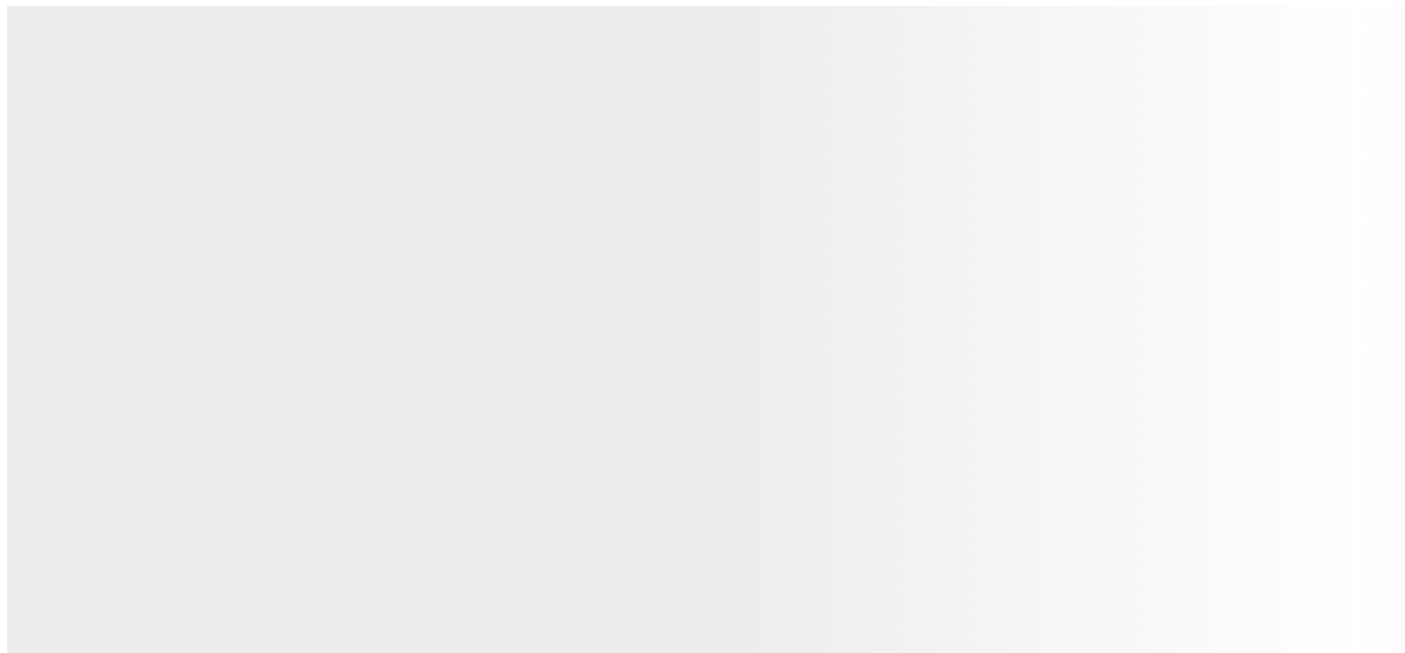
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