

STATEMENT FROM INQUEST

NOVEMBER 2ND 2004 FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

POLICE MUST ACCEPT RULE OF LAW

INQUEST and lawyers for the Stanley family are surprised by the news that Metropolitan police officers from SO19 have decided to cease carrying their firearms in response to the inquest verdict of unlawful killing on Friday, 29 October 2004.

SO19 officers appear to have been misled by the Police Federation into seeing Friday's verdict as a jury second-guessing a split second decision taken by officers who opened fire believing themselves to be in imminent danger of being shot at. That is NOT correct. That was simply what these officers claimed in their evidence.

The family's view is that, had the jury accepted the officers' evidence (i.e. that the officers believed they were under imminent threat) the jury would never have returned a verdict of unlawful killing. The jury appear to have concluded, beyond all reasonable doubt, that these officers did not actually hold that belief.

The family lawyer Daniel Machover said:

'No-one is beyond the law. SO19 officers and their leaders should not try to apply pressure on the CPS, IPCC or their employers, the MPS, to give some kind of immunity to the officers in the Stanley case or any person who does not act in lawful self-defence. To respond to such pressure would involve suspending the rule of law where agents of the state are concerned - something that happens under military dictatorships but should never happen in a modern democracy.'

Deborah Coles, Co-director of INQUEST, who has been working with the Stanley family and their legal team, said:

"In returning a verdict of Unlawful Killing, the jury have clearly rejected the evidence of the two police officers who shot Harry that they acted in self-defence. The Coroner gave a clear summing up that explained in the fullest terms the seriousness of such a verdict and the high standard of proof required. The jury considered their verdict for over seven hours. Based on the evidence the Coroner rightly gave the jury the opportunity to consider if this was an Unlawful Killing.

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Where police officers kill members of the public they must be held to account openly and transparently. The rule of law must be seen to apply equally to all citizens, including those in police uniform.”