

**PRESS RELEASE 20 OCTOBER 2005  
FOR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION**

- **STANLEY FAMILY DEVASTATED AT CPS DECISION NOT TO CHARGE POLICE**
- **PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN ACCOUNTABILITY OF POLICE UNDERMINED**

The family of Harry Stanley, who was shot dead by Metropolitan Police in 1999, has expressed shock and outrage at the refusal by the Crown Prosecution Service to recommend that the officers should face any criminal charges arising out of his fatal shooting.

**Mrs Stanley said:**

“What happened today was an injustice. I am devastated by it, though I half expected it. I am going to keep fighting but can’t say more until I receive legal advice. I am also disgusted that I first heard of the CPS decision at 7.30am because of a leak to a tabloid newspaper.”

Today, despite more evidence being discovered by Surrey Police, the police officers who killed Harry Stanley (and whose accounts of the shooting were not accepted by two inquest juries), have walked away from these events without ever being brought to account in a criminal trial. The family consider that the evidence justified criminal charges. A jury of the officers’ peers should have reached decisions in public according to the evidence and the law. The IPCC and the MPS will now have to consider whether the officers should face disciplinary action

**Deborah Coles, Co-Director of INQUEST, said:**

“The fact that police can shoot dead an unarmed man and not be held accountable is abhorrent. The officers’ accounts of the events surrounding the shooting of Harry Stanley were not accepted by two inquest juries, inquests at which these officers were legally represented. Public confidence in the criminal justice system as it relates to the police has been severely undermined by this decision which apparently puts police officers above the law. At a time when there is a massive increase of the number of armed police on our streets, it is imperative that the public have confidence in their ability to act professionally and safely and that they are properly held to account for their actions. The rule of law must apply equally to all citizens including those in police uniform. This decision follows a pattern of cases where police officers have escaped prosecution following controversial deaths. While these officers can get on with their lives the Stanley family have lost a much loved husband, father and grandfather forever.”

## Notes to Editors

The family are legally represented by INQUEST Lawyers Group members Daniel Machover of Hickman and Rose and Tim Owen QC and Danny Friedman of Matrix Chambers.

## Background

On 22 September 1999 Mr. Stanley was shot dead by Inspector Sharman and PC Fagan police officers from the Metropolitan Police firearms unit SO 19. A few minutes before the shooting a caller told the police that an Irishman had just left the Alexandra Public House in Hackney carrying a sawn-off shotgun wrapped in a bag. That person was in fact Harry Stanley a 46-year-old Scottish painter and decorator and father of three children who had been carrying a coffee table leg that had been repaired by one of his brothers. On his journey home he visited a public house for a lemonade and whist there a member of the public mistook, first, Mr Stanley's Scottish accent for an Irish accent, and second, the table leg that he was carrying for a gun. The armed officers responded to the call and killed Mr Stanley in very controversial circumstances.

The original inquest took place in June 2002 in front of the then HM Coroner for Inner North London, Dr Stephen Chan. At its conclusion the jury returned a unanimous '*open*' verdict having been denied the opportunity to consider whether his death was a result of an '*unlawful killing*'. In doing so, that jury rejected the officer's accounts, by finding that the killing was NOT lawful. As a result of a number of serious procedural errors by the Coroner the family judicially reviewed the Coroner. In April 2003, Mr Justice Silber ordered that a fresh inquest be held.

On 29 October 2004 an inquest jury delivered a verdict of unlawful killing and provided a narrative that ended with these words:

"Mr Stanley had begun to turn towards the officers in response to [their verbal] challenge when the shots were fired."

Mr Justice Leveson quashed that verdict in May 2005, while leaving the jury's narrative untouched. The judge decided that the existence of a possible explanation for the killing of Mr Stanley, even though it had never been advanced by the officers, should have prevented the inquest jury from considering unlawful killing.

INQUEST has continued to work with Mr Stanley's family and their lawyers and has raised concerns about the case with MPs, government ministers and international human rights organisations. We have major concerns about the number of fatal shootings by the police (30 since 1993) and procedures for holding the police to account which serve neither the public interest nor the families of the deceased. A disturbing number of these deaths could and should have been avoided.