

PRESS RELEASE

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STATEMENT ON THE VERDICT OF THE INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF JEAN CHARLES DE MENEZES

Deborah Coles, Co-Director of INQUEST, said:

"Nothing is more serious in a democracy than the deliberate use of lethal force by the state and it should be subject to the most rigorous and transparent public scrutiny. Despite the coroner's attempt to undermine and frustrate the vital democratic role of this inquest jury by restricting their options they have returned a damning verdict rejecting the police version of events, the lawfulness of the shooting and the policies and procedures within which they were operating.

Respect for human rights and the rule of law are essential in a free and democratic society. This is critical when faced with the challenge of terrorism. The death of an innocent man and the failure to hold police to account exposes a culture of impunity. It throws into disrepute the current investigatory mechanisms that follow the use of lethal force by the state. This is a worrying trend in the context of the recent attempt by the government to curtail independent investigations with proposals for non-jury, secret inquests into some contentious deaths. Proposals to reform the inquest system will be included in the forthcoming Coroners and Justice Bill but will not address the fundamental issues raised by this inquest."

The jury at the inquest into the death of Jean Charles de Menezes returned an open verdict.

The coroner also asked the jury to answer a number of key questions.

1. "Did firearms officer C12 shout armed police?" ANSWER: NO
2. "Did Mr de Menezes stand up from his seat before he was grabbed in a bear hug by officer Ivor?" ANSWER: YES
3. "Did Mr de Menezes move towards C12 before he was grabbed in a bear hug by Ivor?" ANSWER: NO
4. Do you consider that any of the following factors caused or contributed to the death of Mr de Menezes;
 - a. "The pressure on police after the suicide attacks in July 2005." ANSWER: CANNOT DECIDE

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- b. "A failure to obtain and provide better photographic images of failed bomber Hussain Osman to surveillance officers." ANSWER: YES
- c. "A failure by police to ensure that Mr de Menezes was stopped before he reached public transport." ANSWER: YES
- d. "The general difficulty in providing identification of the man under surveillance in the time available." ANSWER: NO
- e. "The innocent behaviour of Mr de Menezes increasing suspicion." ANSWER: NO
- f. "The fact that the views of the surveillance officers regarding identification were not accurately communicated to the command team and firearms officers." ANSWER: YES
- g. "The fact that the position of the cars containing the firearms officers was not accurately known by the command team as firearms teams were approaching Stockwell Tube." ANSWER: YES
- h. "Shortcomings in the communications system between various police teams on the ground." ANSWER: YES
- i. "Failure to conclude at the time that surveillance officers could have been used to carry out the stop on Mr de Menezes at Stockwell." ANSWER: YES

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Justice4Jean Campaign	www.justice4jean.org
Official Stockwell inquest website	www.stockwellinquest.org.uk

Notes to editors:

1. INQUEST is the only non-governmental organisation in England and Wales that works directly with the families of those who die in custody. It provides an independent free legal and advice service to bereaved people on inquest procedures and their rights in the coroner's courts and conducts policy, parliamentary and research work on the issues arising.
2. INQUEST has long campaigned for fundamental reform of the inquest system which is currently in crisis and failing bereaved families. We note that the proposed Coroners and Justice Bill revealed in last week's Queen's Speech would do little to affect a case such as this.
3. After extensive campaigning by INQUEST proposals for secret inquests were removed from the Counter Terrorism Act 2008 and are now expected to be reintroduced in the Coroners and Justice Bill 2009 which will be published shortly.
4. Up to date comments and response on the inquest proceedings from the Menezes family are available from the family campaign blog www.inquest.justice4jean.org