

## PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release 30 June 2009

### JURY RETURNS VERDICT AT INQUEST INTO THE RESTRAINT-RELATED DEATH OF FAISAL AL-ANI IN SOUTHEND

Sitting before HM Coroner for Southern and South East Essex, Dr Peter Dean  
Southend Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend, SS2 6ER

A jury yesterday returned a narrative verdict into the death in police custody on 31 July 2005 of Faisal Al-Ani. The jury found that Mr Al-Ani, who was suffering from an acute psychotic illness and cardiac dysrhythmia at the time of his death, died following "prolonged energetic restraint." Although the jury concluded that the force used was appropriate, even though some of the methods were described by a police trainer as "in contravention of all guidance," they also found that insufficient consideration had been given to his physical health.

Mr Al-Ani's family are extremely disappointed by the outcome given the evidence that was heard. The inquest was shown shocking CCTV images of the restraint, including Mr Al-Ani being dragged to the ground and an officer appearing to kneel on his back and neck. Police officers also gave evidence that they had punched him whilst he was in the police car which took him to the station where he was left handcuffed and face down before an ambulance was called. He had suffered a cardiac arrest and could not be revived. The family are now left with many unanswered questions about what happened in the police car and at the station. Mr Al-Ani's family have been concerned throughout about the quality of the IPCC investigation which they fear has impacted negatively on the inquest's conclusions.

Carolynn Gallwey, solicitor for the sons of Faisal Al-Ani said:

*This inquest has raised disturbing questions about policing priorities and the ability of Essex police officers to identify and deal appropriately with mentally ill individuals. One of the police witnesses told the jury that Mr Al-Ani probably did not even recognise that the men restraining him were police officers. The inquest jury was effectively told that securing the "control and compliance" of even those suspected of trivial offences overrides their right to be dealt with safely.*

Mrs Al-Ani, Faisal's mother said:

*It is the cruellest thing in life to be told that you have lost a child. The treatment that Faisal received from the police was atrocious. They approached him without finding out the facts and acted without finding out the facts. In my opinion they were responsible for his death.*

continues...

# Inquest

Deborah Coles, Co Director of INQUEST, commented:

*It is deeply disturbing that another vulnerable man has died following a period of restraint by the police, using restraint methods outside their guidance. How often do the police have to be reminded that restraining people for long periods is dangerous and life-threatening? The apparent justification of the use of such a level of force on the basis of public order is extremely worrying.*

Faisal Al-Ani's family was represented at the inquest by INQUEST Lawyers Group members barrister Stephen Simblet of Garden Court Chambers, instructed by Carolynn Gallwey of Bhatt Murphy Solicitors.

## Notes to editors:

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 work on the issues arising.

INQUEST is campaigning to ensure that the Coroners and Justice Bill 2009 results in fundamental reform of an inquest system currently hampered by delay, inconsistency of approach and lack of resources and unable to fulfil its vital function of preventing unnecessary deaths.

The government must also make changes to ensure that bereaved families can participate effectively in inquest hearings by having equal access, alongside the police and Prison Service, to non means-tested public funding for their legal representation. [INQUEST's briefing on the Coroners & Justice Bill](#)

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