

Letter to Home Secretary James Cleverly

Policing in London – disproportionality, transparency and the right to protest

Key information

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Dear Home Secretary,

I am writing as a Green Party Member of the London Assembly to welcome you to your new role as Home Secretary.

This is a critical time for the country, and for London. As a former London Assembly Member yourself, you will be more acutely aware than most of the importance of your role to the oversight and performance of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS).

Trust in the MPS has fallen to an all-time low, with just a third of Londoners, and a quarter of women and ethnic minorities, trusting the institution.¹ In March of this year, the Baroness Casey Review found the MPS to be institutionally racist, sexist and homophobic. Over a fifth of MPS staff experienced bullying, rising to a third of those with a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity. Claims for disability discrimination are the most frequent, and yet Baroness Casey concluded that “there is no willingness to learn from these cases”.²

Your predecessor expressed a distinct lack of interest in these tragic findings, choosing to instead investigate police ‘activism’ and ‘wokery’. At best these interventions were distractions. At worst, they undermined the efforts of the MPS and the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) to deliver on Baroness Casey’s recommendations.

Standards of policing must be improved. The widespread and historic disproportionality of the policing of Londoners – young and Black Londoners in particular, who are consistently over-policed and under-protected – must be reckoned with and addressed. Tactics like the inappropriate strip searching of children, which the MPS Commissioner has admitted was ‘misused’ and ‘overused’, must end.³ And if we as London Assembly Members are to be able to properly scrutinise the work of MOPAC and the MPS to deliver on this agenda of change,

transparency to us and the public must be paramount.

I also wish to address your predecessor's attempt to exert political pressure on the MPS' policing of protest generally, and in particular, in the lead up to Armistice Day.

This attempt was utterly inappropriate and showed a complete disregard for both the operational independence of the MPS and the urgent need, particularly at this time, for the Home Office to reduce community tension, not incite it. It was clearly dangerous, in light of the violence that far right groups brought to the streets of London on Armistice Day itself.

The right to peacefully protest is sacrosanct, and the language the Home Secretary chose to use to describe marches calling for a ceasefire was clearly unfit for the office you now hold.

I sincerely hope that your experience as a London Assembly Member will give pause to such political intervention from your office in future, and instead encourage greater sensitivity to the diversity of our city and the importance of tolerance and respect.

I would welcome a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss the policing of London and the importance of the agenda I describe, and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Russell

Green Party Member of the London Assembly

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