



PRESS RELEASE

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FAMILY DEVASTATED AFTER ACQUITTAL OF POLICE OFFICERS IN MIKEY POWELL CASE

Today, following a criminal trial at Leicester Crown Court which lasted nearly three months, the West Midlands Police officers accused of various charges including battery and dangerous driving in relation to the death of Mikey Powell on the night of 7 September 2003 were found not guilty on all counts.

The family of Mikey Powell issued the following statement:

“The Powell family are like any other family who have lost a loved one as a result of a death in police custody. All we are seeking is justice - sadly today's verdict is a travesty of justice.

This is yet another instance where a fit young man has come into contact with the police, been restrained, taken into custody and within a matter of hours is pronounced dead.

Mikey was a hard-working, loving father of three boys - that's how he will be remembered by his family and friends. But for others Mikey has become just another statistic - another person added to the growing list of deaths in custody where no police officer has been held accountable. There have been over 1200 such deaths, spanning 25 years; and it seems ridiculous that this can be allowed to continue - and it will continue while police officers are not held accountable for their actions, and still continue to receive Crown Court acquittals.

The Powell family have sat through 12 weeks of this trial in the hope that at the end of this ordeal, and that's just what it has been - an ordeal - we would get some sort of justice. We have listened to all the evidence from both Prosecution and Defence; we have had to relive the tragic moments of the early hours of the 7th September 2003; we have seen family members reduced to tears - we knew this was going to happen and we were prepared to go through with it - in the hope that justice would be done. Sadly, for the Powell family and friends, it has not.

A person's life should not be allowed to be taken away by anyone, let alone by the very person, or persons, who swore an oath to protect it.

Families have been campaigning for the deaths in custody issue to be addressed by the Prime Minister for a number of years. Every year since 1999, on the final Saturday in October, a delegation of people who have lost loved ones in such circumstances has presented a letter to number 10 Downing Street, highlighting the issues of deaths in custody, and inviting the Prime Minister to respond. Needless to say, no response has ever been forthcoming.

We would hate to think that in order for this to be addressed by the Prime Minister it would require the loss of one of his loved ones in similar circumstances to those of Mikey Powell, before he considered this to be a worthwhile issue.”

Gilly Mundy of INQUEST said,

“The trial has examined very important issues which time and again are raised by similar deaths in police custody such as the use of force, CS spray and the care of vulnerable detainees in police stations. The family now await a prompt Independent Police Complaints Commission decision whether they will recommend disciplinary action against those officers who were charged with the care of Mikey on the night of his death.”

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.

Further Information	www.inquest.org.uk
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