

**UNDERCOVER POLITICAL POLICING & SCOTLAND:
SCOTTISH JUSTICE MINISTER, MICHAEL MATHESON,
REJECTS CALLS FOR AN INQUIRY INTO UNDERCOVER
POLICING**

The Scottish Justice Minister, Michael Matheson has today (Wednesday 7 February 2018) has announced that he will not be calling for a public inquiry into undercover political policing in Scotland. This is despite the fact that a report from the HMICS lists serious undercover political policing by the Special Demonstration Squad (SDS) and the national Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU) in Scotland.

In his statement to the Scottish Parliament he noted that undercover political policing had taken place north of the border. Yet, he has refused the need for a public inquiry – stating that there was a lack of evidence of undercover political policing, and that calling a public inquiry was not proportionate and too costly.

It is accepted that during the G8 Summit at Gleneagles in 2005, the Metropolitan Police sent SDS and NPOIU undercover officers into Scotland to spy on activists. It also talks of a wider ‘cadre’ (pt.176) where these Scottish officers? Amongst these officers was known undercover officer Mark Kennedy, who had, between 2003 and 2010, infiltrated numerous campaign groups and had formed intimate relationships with women, and Carlo Neri who had targeted a woman known publicly as ‘Andrea’, and had been welcomed into her Scottish family.

Additionally officers from Scotland were seconded to national agencies. (pt.169) Where they based in Scotland? Was there a Unit in Scotland?

The report from the HMCIS only scratches the surface of the extent of undercover political policing in Scotland. This is even something the authors of the HMICS report accept – “...it is our assessment that the information provided in our report as it relates to the NPOIU deployments to Scotland should be considered as provisional and not conclusive.” (pt.170)

Only a public inquiry would be and can be inquisitorial and conclusive.

Yet, Michael Matheson has made an announcement that despite revelations that police officers, and in particular, London's Metropolitan Police's Special Demonstration Squad had operated in Scotland and possibly without the permission of the Scottish authorities, he will not call for a public Inquiry

Tilly Gifford, environmental justice campaigner and member of Plane Stupid, had been targeted in Scotland, and in 2009, officers had attempted to recruit her as an informant. Referred to as an on-going "business arrangement", Tilly was asked to betray her friends, beliefs and the communities in Scotland that she had been campaigning to protect. In the course of three meetings, police officers had indicated that they would give Tilly cash payments in exchange for information, and threatened her with prison should she fail to cooperate.

The identities of all of these officers remain unknown, and it is unclear who had made the decision to target activists in Scotland and on what basis.

The announcement today, not to call a public inquiry in Scotland is extremely disappointing. We believe it is one which may not be backed up by the law.

Working jointly, the Public Interest Law Unit (London) and Balfour and Manson (Edinburgh) initiated Judicial Review, on behalf of Tilly Gifford, challenging the decision of the UK Government and separately the decision of the Scottish Ministers in respect of their failures to extend a public inquiry into undercover policing operations in Scotland. On 14 September 2017, Court of Session in Edinburgh granted permission for a full judicial review hearing to take place.

We will now have no choice but to continue that action on behalf of our client.

As is the case for all activists who may have been spied on in Scotland, the answers to these questions fall outside the UK Inquiry's remit which is limited to England and Wales.

Paul Heron (solicitor at the Public Interest Law Unit) has said:

"The right of access to justice is both fundamental and constitutional, and state bodies must be held to account when abusing their powers. It is shocking that Tilly and other activists who have also been spied on are unable to participate in an Inquiry into covert operations which have dramatically affected their lives and the lives of their families."

“It cannot be right that whilst trade unionists, blacklisted workers and campaigners have the right to know who spied on them in England and Wales, that following this announcement, my client and other campaigners will not be afforded the same right – we now have no choice but to continue that fight for a full independent public inquiry into political policing through Judicial Review proceedings.”

Tilly Gifford has said:

“Through the Pitchford Inquiry, those in Wales and England who have suffered extreme abuses have the potential to have light shed on these sexual, emotional and physical violations carried out by the state. We know that these abusive relationships also happened on Scottish soil. These were intrusions into people’s lives, using the names of dead children. It’s established that Scottish Police were working with the NPOIU. At the G8 many English undercovers were operating in Scotland, but today we hear that there will be no investigation into miscarriages of justice. The identities of the officers who targeted me remain unknown, as is who made the decision to target me and on what basis. There is no doubt that the police have lost the trust of the public, and only an open enquiry with strong parameters could address these issues of state sanctioned abuses. This is an ongoing fight for truth and accountability. It is the very political, policing and corporate establishments who sanctioned these abuses that have composed this HMICS review, and now deny Scotland a public inquiry. Our process of legally challenging this decision will continue.”

If you believe that you were the subject of political policing please contact the Public Interest Law Unit on: 07747857172

ENDS