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FREE SPEECH UNION

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26th October 2020

The Free Speech Union, Dr David Starkey and Darren Grimes Lodge Formal Complaint With Metropolitan Police

The Free Speech Union, along with Dr David Starkey and Darren Grimes, has today made a formal complaint to the Metropolitan Police about Chief Superintendent Elisabeth Chapple. Ms Chapple led the South West Basic Command Unit in October and therefore has overall responsibility for the vexatious investigation of Dr Starkey and Mr Grimes. We have also complained about the behaviour of DC Imtiaz Shah, who sought the attendance of Mr Grimes and Dr Starkey for interview in connection with the allegation and threatened them with arrest if they did not comply.

We are deeply concerned that senior officers in the Metropolitan Police appear to be making significant operational decisions on the basis of media commentary and social media postings. In his email demanding that Dr Starkey and Mr Grimes submit themselves for interview, DC Shah provides *prima facie* evidence that:

1. This investigation was primarily compelled by deference to Black Lives Matter, a hard-left political organisation that aims, among other things, to defund the police.
2. DC Shah was influenced in his interpretation of the evidence by media commentary and postings on social media, as well as the views of those (in his words) “in more prominent positions in society”.

As a result, two broadcast journalists were threatened with arrest. This caused significant distress and risked serious reputational damage.

We have asked the Metropolitan Police for the following:

1. A formal apology for seeking an interview with Dr Starkey and Mr Grimes;
2. all correspondence relevant to the decision to interview them in relation to the allegation;
3. the initial allegation received from Durham Police on the 4th July 2020;
4. the file prepared for the Crown Prosecution Service for the purpose of obtaining early investigation advice;
5. the CPS pre-investigation advice received from the Crown Prosecution Service on the 25th September or any related early investigative advice received with respect to the allegation;
6. any instructions to DC Shah to undertake interviews pursuant to the allegation;

7. the details of any review process that was undertaken with respect to that decision;
8. any notes of any telephone calls, personal attendances or meetings related to the allegation.

Toby Young, the General Secretary of the Free Speech Union, said:

The Metropolitan Police made a serious mistake in deciding to investigate Dr David Starkey and Darren Grimes and should apologise. Dr Starkey's remarks in an interview with Mr Grimes came nowhere near meeting the threshold for stirring up racial hatred, let alone Mr Grimes's decision to publish them. The Public Order Act 1986 was never intended to regulate speech and debate and using it for that purpose will have a chilling effect on free speech. It is not the police's job to investigate thought crimes.

A copy of the complaint is available on request from info@freespeechunion.org.