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Rt Hon. Priti Patel MP
Home Secretary
2 Marsham Street
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By email only

Copied to: Rt Hon. Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London; Baroness Casey of Blackstock

16 February 2022

Dear Home Secretary,

I am the Chief Executive of JUSTICE, an all-party law reform and human rights organisation working to strengthen the justice system in the United Kingdom. In February 2021, JUSTICE published the [report](#) '*Tackling Racial Injustice: Children and the Youth Justice System*'. The report examines the causes of racial disproportionality in the Youth Justice System of England and Wales and offers solutions to increase decision-makers' understanding of children as well as eliminate, if not minimise, bias and discrimination throughout the system.

On 10 February 2022, Dame Cressida Dick resigned as Metropolitan Police Commissioner as a result of losing the Mayor of London's confidence in her ability to root out "*the racism, sexism, homophobia, bullying, discrimination and misogyny that still exists*" in the Metropolitan Police Service. While each of these challenges undoubtedly requires a robust response to gain the public's confidence, in light of our report's findings our focus in this letter is on racism in particular.

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President of Council **Baroness Kennedy of The Shaws QC** Chief Executive **Fiona Rutherford**

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Racism is an incontrovertible reality of our justice system, and particularly so in its impact on children. Children from ethnic minorities make up 18% of the 10 to 17 year old population and yet 52% of the same age group in custody are from ethnic minorities. Our report found that these children are being left behind, languishing under years of systemic racism and poor treatment across the criminal justice system. Children from ethnic minorities are also less likely to be diverted away from the criminal justice system. Instead, they are more likely to be stopped and searched, remanded in custody, and subsequently receive a custodial sentence. This is unacceptable, and requires urgent redress.

Moreover, it is evident that the actions of the Metropolitan Police have further eroded the trust of ethnic minority communities in London. This is clear from numerous instances over the past five years, such as the ever-rising and disproportionate use of stop and search powers (especially against Black men), the bigoted content of text messages sent by serving police officers, and the appalling treatment of Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry, two murdered Black women “*dehumanised*” when officers shared photos of them. It is disappointing that, 23 years on from the [findings](#) of Sir William MacPherson that Stephen Lawrence’s murder had been “*marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership*”, the Metropolitan Police, and its culture, have not progressed. The proposed Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill would serve to further [compound](#) these problems by expanding police power at a time when trust is so low.

The new Commissioner must be equipped to recognise and to address the entrenched injustices that these communities face. Our report’s 45 positive and practical recommendations would go some way to achieve that aim, such as abolishing the Gangs Violence Matrix, suspending further section 60 stops and searches pending a Home Office review, enforcing mandatory child-focused training for all police, requiring all complaints concerning children be investigated by the Independent Office for Police Conduct, and mandating that police turn on their body worn video cameras before every stop and search so that improper conduct is prevented or caught.

It is only action that will demonstrate the necessary commitment to meeting the legitimate expectations of London’s ethnic minority communities. I hope that this will be at the forefront of your mind when considering the candidates for the new Commissioner.

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I would welcome the opportunity to discuss JUSTICE's report (enclosed), and its recommendations, with you in more detail.

I am copying this letter to Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, in recognition of his leadership of the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime, and Baroness Casey of Blackstock, with respect to her ongoing review of the behaviour and internal culture of the Metropolitan Police.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Rutherford', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Fiona Rutherford
Chief Executive
JUSTICE

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