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## UK briefing: **May**

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# Counter-terrorism

## Criticism of MI5 role in death of Rhianan Rudd adds to growing condemnation of security agencies

- Rhianan Rudd was a 16 year old girl who committed suicide in May 2022 at a children's home she was being housed in.

Prior to her death she had been [prosecuted for terror offences](#) for downloading a bomb-making manual, though the prosecution was dropped after 15 months of investigations.

- During the course of her prosecution, MI5 and the police had been aware that Rhianan had been groomed and sexually exploited by a far-right individual based in the US, but proceeded with the prosecution.
- As part of a pre-inquest hearing prior to the commencement of an inquest into Rhianan's case, [her mother accused state agencies](#) of contributing to the girl's death by continuing with the prosecution despite being aware of her vulnerabilities.

She stated that "In continuing to investigate and prosecute, and not withdraw the prosecution, the state contributed to Rhianan's death."

- The case adds on to a litany of recent instances where state agencies, particularly MI5, have been criticised for their role in terrorism-related matters.

This includes families of those killed in the 2017 Manchester Arena bombing who [intend to sue MI5](#) for failures around the incident, following stinging

criticism of the agency in the final report of the Manchester Arena inquiry.

Last year, a woman also [initiated proceedings to sue MI5](#) for their role in 'effectively enabling' violent abuse by her former partner, a far-right individual who had been recruited as an undercover asset by the agency.

## Latest counter-terror statistics conform to general trends in recent years

- The Home Office released [statistics on the use of counter-terrorism powers](#) in the year up to 31 March 2023.

The stats largely conform to recent trends in the use of counter-terror powers in Britain in recent years.

- In the time period there were:
  - **169** terror-related arrests, a fall of 14% on the previous period.
  - **232** individuals were in custody for terrorism-related offences as of publication, with nearly two-thirds (**64%**) being there for 'Islamist'-related terror offences, and slightly over a quarter (**28%**) there for far-right related offences.
  - **2,493** Schedule 7 stops undertaken, a slight decrease of 4% on the previous period
  - **51% (1375)** of Schedule 7 stops involved the taking of biometric samples were subject to biometric exam - a provision introduced by the Counter-terrorism and Border Security Act 2019
- **7** stops involved strip searches, and **3** instances where an individual was delayed access to a solicitor
- The figures for Schedule 7 stops indicate a possible levelling out of annual stops following a gradual decrease in the use of the power over the last decade.

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This decrease has been explained by the Home Office as resulting from more 'targeted' use of the power, as well as being a response to public scrutiny of Schedule 7.

However recent laws have afforded border officers greater powers during Schedule 7 stops, such as collecting biometric identifiers - which is now used in a majority of stops - and allowing them to delay access to solicitors for those subject to a stop.

# Other

## Appointment to head review into Leicester clashes promises little more than criminalisation of Muslim youth

- Minister for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Michael Gove has appointed former MP Lord Ian Austin to [lead a review into the clashes](#) between Hindu and Muslims in Leicester last year, sparked by Hindutva-inspired youth in and outside of the city.
- Prior to the latest General Election, Austin was a Labour MP. He resigned from the party in early 2019 and was made Trade Envoy for Israel by then-Prime Minister Theresa May. He later campaigned for the election of Boris Johnson's Conservatives.

After Johnson's victory, Austin was made a member of the House of Lords.

- Austin has had close [links to the hard-right Henry Jackson Society](#) - who have [sought to deny](#) Hindutva links to the Leicester disturbances - including hosting their events in Parliament.

He is also an arch-Zionist: he was a member of Labour Friends of Israel, is on the [Steering Committee](#) of West Midlands Friends of Israel, [spoke at the conference](#) of the US Israel lobby organisation AIPAC calling on people to 'fight anti-Zionism', and [was forced to apologise](#) after falsely claiming that

the pro-Palestine organisation Friends of Al-Aqsa were Holocaust deniers.

- Over the past year there have been attempts to roll the Leicester clashes into the security framework of 'counter-extremism' and social cohesion.

Given Austin's pedigree - and particularly his appointment being under the ideologically-committed neoconservative Michael Gove - it appears that the review into the Leicester clashes will offer little other than to reinforce tired narratives being spun by the British rightwing, and stigmatise Muslim youths in Leicester.