

# Have Historical and Current Rape or Other Sex-Related Crimes, When Reported, Ever Been Recategorised as Protest Activity?

## A Question Arising from the Operation Talla Evidence

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is not to make allegations.

It is to ask a question.

A simple question.

A question which, on its face, may appear absurd.

It is a question which arises naturally from documentary evidence now available within the public domain concerning Operation Talla and related policing activity during the Covid-19 period.

The question is this:

***Have reports of rape, sexual offending, or other serious criminal allegations ever been recategorised, reclassified, filtered, redirected, or otherwise treated as protest-related activity rather than criminal allegations requiring conventional crime-recording and investigative consideration?***

This question matters because public confidence in policing depends upon one foundational principle:

Criminal allegations should be assessed according to their evidential content, not according to their political, social, or narrative context.

### **Why the Question Arises**

Operation Talla disclosures have revealed the existence of guidance and communications relating to the handling of certain categories of public reporting during the Covid period.

The disclosures demonstrate that significant attention was given to the categorisation of activity associated with vaccine concerns, public campaigning and what were described within policing structures as anti-vaccination activity.

The evidence further demonstrates the existence of national coordination structures involving Gold and Silver command arrangements, strategic intelligence functions, operational guidance and dissemination frameworks.

Importantly, some disclosed material suggests that reports presented by members of the public could be viewed through an operational lens associated with protest management, intelligence gathering, or public order considerations.

That fact alone creates an obvious public-interest question.

What happens when an allegation contains two elements simultaneously?

For example, an allegation of criminal conduct and a political or socially contentious context.

Which element takes priority?

The criminal allegation?

Or the context in which it is made?

### **The Principle at Stake**

Imagine two identical witness statements, both of which allege serious criminal conduct. Both contain the same evidential content and both describe the same alleged offence.

The **only** difference is that one allegation arises in an ordinary setting whilst the other arises within a politically sensitive environment.

The public would reasonably expect both allegations to be treated identically. Anything less would represent a departure from equality before the law.

The law does not recognise:

- politically convenient rape;

- politically inconvenient rape;
- acceptable sexual offending;
- unacceptable sexual offending.

The law recognises only criminal allegations requiring proper consideration.

That principle is fundamental.

### **The Historical Question**

The issue is not confined to Covid-era matters. It has broader relevance.

Historically, policing institutions have dealt with:

- organised sexual exploitation;
- grooming gangs;
- institutional abuse;
- offences involving public officials;
- offences involving influential individuals;
- offences carrying significant political sensitivity.

In such circumstances, there has often been criticism that institutional considerations sometimes influenced operational decisions.

The public record contains numerous examples where authorities have later been criticised for:

- failing to record allegations properly;

- failing to investigate adequately;
- prioritising reputational concerns;
- avoiding politically sensitive outcomes.

This paper does not suggest that such conduct occurred in every case. It merely observes that history demonstrates the importance of asking difficult questions.

### **The Operation Talla Context**

Operation Talla has introduced a new dimension into that discussion.

The disclosures now available reveal structures capable of:

- national coordination;
- intelligence collection;
- information sharing;
- strategic direction;
- operational guidance.

The existence of such structures is not, in itself, improper, as large-scale matters often require coordination.

The public-interest question concerns something else.

It concerns whether criminal allegations were ever viewed primarily through the lens of operational management rather than criminal investigation.

If so:

- What safeguards existed?
- Who exercised oversight?
- Who ensured that criminal allegations remained criminal allegations?

### **A Question Which Demands an Answer**

No democratic society should fear this question.

Indeed, confidence in policing requires it.

The question is not whether criminal allegations should be investigated.

The question is whether any process existed by which criminal allegations could cease to be viewed primarily as criminal allegations.

If such a process existed, the public deserve to understand:

- when it was used;
- by whom it was authorised;
- what oversight existed;
- what safeguards were applied;
- and what effect it had upon crime recording and investigative decisions.

## **Conclusion**

The question posed by this paper is deliberately narrow.

It is not:

***Did this happen?***

It is:

***Could this happen, did it happen and how would the public know?***

Operation Talla disclosures have revealed the existence of command structures, guidance mechanisms, intelligence systems and operational frameworks which were largely unknown to the public at the time and that revelation alone justifies scrutiny.

If criminal allegations can ever become subordinate to narrative management, operational convenience, or strategic objectives, then the issue extends far beyond any individual case or crime-category.

It becomes a question about the integrity of policing itself and that is a question which no free society can afford to ignore.

***Ian Clayton***

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