



**The Sheku Bayoh Public Inquiry  
Witness Statement**

**Kadijartu Johnson**

**Taken by** [REDACTED]

**Via MS Teams**

**On 4 November 2022**

1. My name is Kadijartu Johnson. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1977. I am currently employed as a staff nurse. My address is [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

**Delivery of the death message**

2. I am asked to explain how I first learned that my brother, Sheku Bayoh, had passed away. On 3 May 2015, at about 15.00 or so in the afternoon, Ade, my husband, called me because two plainclothes police officers came to our house. Ade called me that somebody wanted to see me. I went to the living room. The day before it was my daughter's birthday, so she was in the living room with my relative's child. They were playing with the toys and presents. When I went in there, I saw these two guys, and Ade told my daughter to take their toys up the stairs to play. During that time, I caught their badge and I saw that they were from Police Scotland. Then I started just shaking. I knew there was something wrong. When my daughter had left the room, they

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asked me what's my name. I said, "My name is Kadi Johnson" They asked if I know Sheku, I said "Yes." Then they said, "What's the relationship?" I said, "He's my brother." Then they said, "Well, there's no easy way to say this, but he has passed away."

3. At that time, I was very upset, and Ade was trying to console me. I was not with it for that short period of time. I think Ade asked the questions "How did he die?" "What happened?" and things like that. Then when I came around, I said, "He's got a partner." I said, "Does she know that he has passed away?" Then they said "Yes." I think they left the house. I do not remember the names of the officers who came to the house.
4. When they left, I phoned Colette, and she too was crying. She said, "Can I come to the house?" I said, "Yes, of course." So, shortly after, she came to the house. The day before we had friends and other family members in our house. They all know Sheku, and we were all there together, happy. I had to phone all of them again to say this has happened, so they all came to the house. Before they came, the police officers came again. They were going in and out. One was sitting in and the other one was going in and out.
5. Ade by this point had said "I want to know how Sheku died. You need to tell us how Sheku died." They said their gaffer was coming to explain to us how Sheku died. Then Ade said, "Who is your gaffer?" And then they said, "Mr McEwan." Then Ade said, "Who, Garry?" They were a bit shocked that Ade should know his first name. So Ade said to them, "You tell Garry McEwan to come and explain to us. Ade Johnson wants to know exactly how Sheku died." They left again. One of them came back in and said, "Garry's in a meeting, he won't be able to come." He went out again and came back and read from his little black book.

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6. They said "Sorry, Sheku was involved in a forceful arrest, and, during that time, he died." That made us more upset again. By that time Colette and her mum were there. That made us more upset again. Then he came back again and said Garry will come to see us. Then after that, they left, and we didn't see them again.
7. When they mentioned the word "forceful arrest," I said, "forceful arrest?" So, it means that during the struggle they must have obstructed his airway and he must have suffocated and died. That was just my feeling when they mentioned forceful arrest. I was just so upset, and just couldn't believe that Sheku had passed away. It's somebody I saw a few hours ago.
8. When they had left, at that point other friends and relatives, who were at the party the day before, they had come to the house and that's when Garry came with a lady. He met Ade at the door. He asked Ade if he can speak to me and Ade privately, and Ade said, "No, just come to the living room and speak to everybody; we're all family." So that's when he came to the living room to explain what had happened. He said that when the police met Sheku, he didn't obey their commands, and he said that he was carrying a machete, and then we all reacted, "What? A machete?" Then he said, "Oh, maybe it might be a blade, it might be a knife." So, it wasn't really clear what exactly Sheku was holding at that time when he explained it to us. Then he said Sheku had punched a policewoman, the policewoman fell, and he stamped on the policewoman. That's when the other police officers used their batons and spray, and they got him on the floor, and he died in hospital.
9. Everybody was so upset, and I believe other people were asking him questions. I can't really remember, but they were asking questions. I do remember that when he said a machete, everybody screamed, "What, a machete?" because where would he even get a machete? Then when he mentioned that Sheku hit the policewoman and stamped on the policewoman

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I said, "What? Are you sure it's my brother Sheku because he will never do that? He will never do that to a woman." I said, "Are you sure?" He didn't really answer. That was when Ade was asking other questions, I think.

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## Engagement with Police Scotland

10. I am asked if I recall approximately what time Garry McEwan arrived at the house. I think it was between four and five o'clock. I am asked whether Garry McEwan provided any information as to what would happen next. He did say that he will keep in touch, and he said let us just keep this in the four corners of this wall. When he left, I think he was just out of the door, one of the young girls went on their phones and saw on social media that it said something about a terrorist attack that happened, and the police have everything under control. The MSP at the time in the area they were supporting the good work of the police officers because they had got this terrorist under control or something like that. So, then we are all upset again.
11. I am asked if we had any further engagement with Police Scotland that evening. They did say that a family liaison officer will come. Somebody came after that; I believe maybe it was a family liaison officer. But I remember another person coming to the house, that was quite late. When he came in, he said we should go and identify the body. I said to him "No." I said, "My mum is in London. I'll arrange for her to come the next day, and when she comes, we'll go and identify the body." That's what I said to him.
12. I am asked to look at my previous statement that I gave to the PIRC. In that statement I say: - "Sometime after 10 p.m., Keith Harrower and another person, Alex Maguire, from the Police Investigations & Review Commissioner, PIRC, called at our house and explained the role of the PIRC and about the post-mortem." I am asked whether having read this I am content that this was the individual that I spoke to later that night. Yes. They were from the PIRC.
13. I am asked whether I think Keith Harrower was clear in his understanding that the family's wishes were that the post-mortem should not take place. I believe so. Yes, I believe so.

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14. I am asked whether Garry McEwan or anyone else from Police Scotland came to the house that night or in the days that followed. Yes, he came to the house after that. He came maybe a couple of days or so. He was coming to the house just to check how we are and if we need anything, but most of the time he was speaking to Ade. If we needed anything we should just say to him, he was there to support us and things like that. I am asked how I felt Garry McEwan treated the family. When he came to deliver the message, clearly, we know he was the senior person there, and it was a public holiday. So I don't think he was working at that time because when he wasn't clear about the blade, the knife, the machete. I did say to him, "Garry, you're on holiday. They've called you in now just to give you this information, so it's what they have told you, that's what you're bringing to us. When you have the proper information, then let us know." After that, the next days, he was just coming in just to check how we are, like I said, if we need anything. He was just there to check what can he do for us, something like that, that's what he was doing.

15. I am asked how I feel Police Scotland dealt with the family in the immediate aftermath of Sheku's death. I feel it was appalling the way we were treated because how can you come and deliver such information when you know that the very first question is "How did my loved one die?" and yet you couldn't tell us. Why did they feel that they can come to our house to deliver such information without knowing the proper answer, or why did they decide to tell us whatever they want to say to us, and they thought that we will go with it, or we will just believe it? I work in the healthcare profession. I have seen the way doctors break such news to family members. Even if a death is expected, the way you break the news to family members, you do it with compassion. You do it in that way, but they just came, stood there saying "He's passed away." That's it. How did he die? You couldn't tell us yet you're telling us different stories. Maybe they're looking for somebody. He died on the way. He collapsed on the road. Why do you have to say that? Why do you treat us

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like that? We were very upset with the way we were treated and the way they handled the situation. I don't want to believe that that's how they break the news to other family members, because if that's how they do it then that's appalling.

16. I don't know if it's because we are black people, they just think that whatever they tell us we'll go with it. Whatever they say, we'll just say, "Oh yeah, yeah, that's fine." No, we would not settle for that because we know the system. We've been in Scotland for a long time. If things happen, we are expecting you to come and tell us the truth. I think if they had told us the truth, that very moment, yes, we would have been upset, but I think we would have handled it in a different way than how we are dealing with it now. Because they lied from the beginning, we lost faith.

### **Engagement with the PIRC**

17. I am asked whether I recall having any interaction with Family Liaison Officers from the PIRC. Yes, they attended to the house. They came once but they didn't do much to be honest. I think there was not much engagement with them to start with. I think they just came to take some details or so from us and I don't think there was much engagement to be fair. That's why we didn't continue further on with them. I don't know much about what the family liaison officers do. I don't know much about their role. People have asked me, "Did you get counselling and things like that?" Nothing came from them. Nothing was even offered from them.

18. I am asked about general interactions with the PIRC and any meetings that I may have attended. We had a meeting with PIRC and Kate Frame was the senior there at the time. The meeting was not fruitful for me. When we went to the meeting it was all superiority, that's what we got from her. We didn't get any clear information. We didn't get any clear support from her, yet she just explained how things go, what their role was, and things like that. For me it

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was all about her and her organisation rather than any remorse. Where is the sympathy? What are you going to do to support this family? There was nothing there. They lacked compassion towards the family.

19. I am asked whether I had any concerns regarding the instruction of experts by the PIRC. No, I can't recall that. I think that was more Aamer who was dealing with that.

## Post Mortem

20. I am asked how I found out that the post mortem had taken place. On the Sunday, we contacted Aamer, and we left a message on his answering machine at the time. Then, on the Monday, he did call back and he spoke to Ade, and he said, "Come to the office on the Tuesday." So, we went to his office on the Tuesday, and then he asked if we are ready to view the body. We said "Yes." So, then he made a phone call. He made a phone call to make an arrangement for us to view the body, and then that's when we understood that the post-mortem has already been done. We were all really upset in Aamer's office. Why did they go about doing that without us not identifying the body?
21. On our way coming back home we got a call from the Sierra Leone embassy down in London to say somebody from Police Scotland, I think, or somebody from Scotland are saying that they have got their citizen who has died and asking what the process is for sending the body back to Sierra Leone. Sheku has got my father's name and my father worked for so many governments in Sierra Leone and is well known in Sierra Leone. He passed away about 17 years ago. When they called about the name Sheku Bayoh people were thinking "What? Sheku Bayoh? Who is this Sheku Bayoh?" They phoned other family members related to my mum's side. I think they phoned my sister and that's when we knew that something like this has happened. Then Ade followed up with the Sierra Leone embassy after that.

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22. I am asked whether as family we were able to see Sheku after the post mortem. Yes, after that Aamer did arrange for us to go and view the body. It was somewhere in Edinburgh we went to see him, but it was only his face, we saw through a glass. That's all we saw. It was all confined. It was just his face. Nothing else, everywhere else was fully covered. We didn't touch him, nothing at all. Somebody took us into the room where he was, and then the person went out and left us there. We were shocked to see that there was a glass partition and that we cannot touch him or anything, but that's how it was. They just left us there, and they went away, and after some time we came out of the room.

23. I am asked if anyone official was in attendance. I can't remember. From the family it was myself, Adama and Kosna's boyfriend at the time actually went in to see Sheku. Ade and Kosna did not go in because they said they did not want to see Sheku in that state. My mum said it was too heart-breaking to remember her son in that way.

### **Engagement with the Lord Advocate and Crown Office**

24. I am asked about whether I recall attending meetings with the Lord Advocates. I am asked, first about my engagement with Frank Mulholland. Frank engaged with us a lot. From the first time we met him, he engaged with us, he showed his interest, and we were involved in every step of the way with Frank. Whatever the decision, we would go for a meeting, we would talk about it, and he would carry on with that. We were quite involved with him, and we were comfortable with him. He arranged for us to see the CCTV in the Crown Office. That was the first time we saw the CCTV. He was quite involved in everything, and he listened to us, and he took our points. We felt he was engaging with us a lot. He kept an open communication with the family.

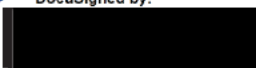
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25. When James Wolffe became involved, the first time we met him it was like he was not interested. It was as if he didn't even have a proper knowledge of the case. I felt that maybe they had briefed him a few minutes before we got in the room because there was no interest at all; there was nothing. When we had the other meeting, when he told us that he's not going to prosecute the police officers, first of all, he did say that he would let us know his decision beforehand, but we got to hear that decision through the media before we met him. We got to know that decision through the media, and that again was upsetting for us because he did promise to involve us before he made any decision, and yet we heard it from the media. When we got to his office again, when he explained why he didn't prosecute, he was bringing up medical evidence. He was bringing up that it might be the drugs that killed him. Nothing in regards to how the police treated him, nothing at all that the police contributed. It was all about Sheku having caused his own death basically.
26. I am asked whether the family expressed their disappointment. I think Ade did mention it to him, that it seems like he doesn't know the case properly. I think Ade discussed that when we were in the room but certainly after that we did raise our concerns and Aamer saw that we were upset with the way the Lord Advocate engaged with us.
27. I am asked to explain how we found out about the decision not to prosecute. If I recall, I think somebody from the media came to the house. I think they knocked on the door and then I think it was Ade they spoke to and then I think they did say to him, "How do you feel with the police not being prosecuted?" Ade said "What?" but I don't think Ade went into much conversation with him, I don't think so, and then he left. I think we then raised this with Aamer.
28. I am asked whether, when we then attended the meeting with the Lord Advocate, they apologised for how we had found out. I think so, yes. I think they said they would look into it, how it happened or how it was leaked but we

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don't know if that was ever followed up. We haven't received any further information about what happened.

29. I am asked how I felt the Lord Advocate and Crown Office treated the family. After the Lord Advocate said that he was not going to prosecute the police officers we totally lost faith. We had lost faith that our brother is no more, and nobody is being held responsible for his death, so we just have to live with this. We just have to live with the pain. We were not interested anymore because we were so heartbroken. The way the Crown Office had cheated us, and I think the PIRC, in the early stages, that's when we had lost faith in them, and nothing was happening with the PIRC after. That was it for the PIRC, and then the Crown Office, after the prosecution, after they said they were not going to prosecute the police officers, that's when we just lost faith and thought "Here we go again. Things are going to be the same as with every person who has died in police custody, nothing has been done. The police will always get away with it and that's the norm," so we just live with it.

30. I am asked whether I ever encountered any obstruction from the police in relation to organisation of vigils or rallies for Sheku. Not that I can remember because most of the things we organised we went ahead with it. So not that I can remember.

**Media engagement**

31. I am asked about my perception of the media coverage at the time of the incident and since. The media coverage during the early days was a lot. Every day Sheku's name and face was on the papers and the stories were that he took drugs, he had a knife, he stabbed a policewoman. There were some papers who will report things that actually happened, and there are

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some that will report things in a different direction to paint Sheku in a bad way to demonise his character. We had all of that and that was a lot of pressure and stress on us as a family, especially me and my family because we used to live in Kirkcaldy, there was an ASDA not far from there and that's where I did most of my shopping. When you go there, his face is all over the papers, and you can see they got to know me now because when I started to give interviews my face would be on the papers as well. You could feel that they are talking about you. You could see people are saying, "That's the sister of the brother." That's what made me move away from where I used to live. I had lived there; it was a good place for me. I gave birth to my children in Kirkcaldy, they went to school there, I had made friends. It was just too much for me, too stressful for me. So I had to leave.

32. There was a man from the Police Federation who made negative remarks in the media. I can't remember the exact words to be honest, but it was something like, he took drugs, he is responsible for his own death. Something along those lines. I can't really remember because at that time I didn't even want to read the papers.

33. I am asked whether I have anything else to add in relation to how Police Scotland, the PIRC or Crown Office dealt with the investigation into Sheku's death or just general comments I want to make. I want the Inquiry to know that in circumstances like this, the family suffers a lot and when they have people like family liaison officers, like I said earlier, I'm not sure what their exact role is but there was no support. There was actually no support and there is a lot of stress for us. We had to set up a campaign group, did things to raise funds just to move the awareness and move the case on, and it was good because we did make some awareness and, in fact, that's where Alan Paton's sister came forward, during one of these campaigns. We had other people who spoke as well and we say to them, "Please can you speak to our

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lawyer and then he can take it further,” but some of them, they didn’t want to go down that route.

34. I moved from Kirkcaldy, a place where I have lived for many years. I had to move there just because of all the stress I’ve been going through. The loss in the family, the financial loss, the stress, everything. That’s when during the Inquiry, when we saw Alan Paton, when he came with his own medical issue, he said he had PTSD. We feel that the Inquiry really took time with him. They paid a lot of attention to Alan Paton but we are also suffering. Not once has anybody asked how is our mental state, how are we coping? Yes, we attend this Inquiry with a smile on our face but the pain we feel is a lot.

35. Families suffer a lot, we lose a lot along the way and it’s not right. It’s not fair. It’s not fair and yet Police Scotland will get away with it and cause more pain again to another family. Why should this happen? We are Black people, we contribute a lot to the Scottish society, we give back to Scotland. So why should we be treated like this? Why? For a whole organisation to come to break some news to you saying they don’t know how your loved one died, giving all sorts of answers, that’s ridiculous. Why? Why did they do that? So these are things I want the Inquiry team to know. It’s really tough. We have lost a lot along the way, a lot. Our lives have changed. Even our children’s lives. We thought that they were little children at the time when Sheku passed, they didn’t understand much, but now the things they come out with, it’s unbelievable. These children are born and bred here. This is where they know. This is all they know. I know Sierra Leone; my children don’t know Sierra Leone.

36. I believe the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that this statement may form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and be published on the Inquiry’s website.

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