



**The Sheku Bayoh Public Inquiry  
Witness Statement**

**Collette Bell**

**Taken by** [REDACTED]

**In person**

**On 26 October 2022 and 10 November 2022**

1. My name is Collette Bell. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1988. My address is [REDACTED]. I am employed. I work in catering for the NHS.

**Morning of 3 May 2015**

2. I am asked to explain what happened on the morning of 3 May and how I became aware that there was an issue. I was staying at my mum’s house on the night of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of May 2015. The next morning at about six o’clock I got a call from Zahid saying not to worry but that there had been an altercation between them both, where Shek had attacked Zahid. That brought up alarm bells straight away because they were more like brothers. They were really close friends and Shek’s not a violent person and he certainly wouldn’t usually have done anything like that. He was just trying to say “Look, Shek’s not himself. Don’t go home.” As soon as I had had that phone call, it raised alarm bells with me because it wasn’t in Shek’s character, so I wanted to make sure he was okay. I also had the fear of what if Shek is drunk or whatever and

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then he comes around and realises that he's had this fight with Zahid and then, I don't know, I was just worried.

3. My first instinct was to give [REDACTED], my three-month-old, to my mum and then go down to speak to Shek and see what was going on, to make sure he was okay. I drove to Kirkaldy. I got to the house, and I was shouting, "Shek" but there was no answer. As you go into the house, there's a hallway and it leads onto the kitchen and then to the right was the living room. So, I'd gone through to the living room shouting him. No reply. I went through to the kitchen, and the kitchen back door was wide open, and then I was looking around and there was a pile of jackets just in front of the sink. Then when I'm looking out into the garden, there was fridge magnets all over the garden. It just seemed very bizarre. I ran upstairs shouting for him. He wasn't there. I remember going into my bedroom. We had a television in the bedroom, and I remember that being on the floor. I just remember thinking, "What's happened here?"
  
4. I tried to phone Shek. I'd gone downstairs trying to phone him, and his phone was ringing, and his phone was in the corner of the kitchen on the floor. I thought, "Shek doesn't go anywhere without his phone. Why is it on the floor? Where is he?" I think at that point I phoned Zahid saying that I couldn't find him; he wasn't in the house, the back door had been left open. He sounded really panicked when I had said it and he said "I told you not to go to the house. Please get out of the house. Stay on the phone until you get in the car and lock the door. Promise me you'll not speak to him if you see him." I thought, "What's going on here?"
  
5. I still wanted to find him, so I remember just driving around Templehall at the time looking for him. I remember going to the shops and seeing one of his friends, Jim, and asking him if he had seen him and he had said he hadn't seen him, and he had offered to come back with me to try and find him, but I said, "We'll try and keep looking for him. We're just going to keep driving

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around.” So I think at that point I phoned my mum and I said what the house was like, that I couldn’t find him, that his phone was in the house, and she had said that she thought I should phone the police because it was so out of character for Shek and we couldn’t find him.

6. I phoned the police and said, “My partner was missing. It was really unlike him. It was out of his character, and I was worried.” They had asked me for a description of him and they had said, “Right, I want you to go back to your house and we’ll have somebody come out to the house to meet you.” Then I had to explain that I had a young baby at home with my mum and that I would have to go home, get my mum, get the baby, and then meet them at the house. So that’s what I done. I drove back to my mum’s, picked her up, got [REDACTED] and then by the time we got back to the house, there was a police car there or two police cars there. I think there was four officers.
7. I took the officers into the house and two officers ushered me into the living room, and then one officer went straight through to the kitchen and one officer went upstairs. I am asked whether the officers were uniformed. I think two were maybe plain clothed and two were in uniform but, honestly, I can’t remember now. I just remember that two of us went into the living room and then one went into the kitchen, one went upstairs. I remember them not asking if they could have a look around. That’s just what they done. But at the time, I wasn’t thinking straight either. I wasn’t thinking, and I just thought “This must be normal, it must be what they do.”
8. I am asked whether the officers ever showed me a warrant to search my property. No, as soon as they got in the house, one went through into the kitchen, one went upstairs, and me, Mum, [REDACTED], and the other two officers went through to the living room. I was aware that they were walking around and kind of going out the house, and in the house, on the phone. But, yes, they didn’t ask.

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9. When the police were in the living room, they had to explain to us that I would have to come down to the station, that they weren't really very sure what was going on, but they wanted to speak to me down at the station. They explained that they were not from the area, that they had been on another shift; they'd maybe just come on shift from Methil. They were insistent that I should pack a bag for me and for [REDACTED], which was confusing for me, and that I would have to go to the station and that I was to go alone. I had said that "I'm not going by myself" and Mum was insistent that I was not going to the police station by myself. So they were very hesitant in letting us all go but they said that they need to speak to us so we would go but I was. pack a bag just for a few days. I explained that so much time had gone past that I would have to feed [REDACTED] so I had gone upstairs to feed [REDACTED] in his room.

10. At this point, I didn't know where all the police officers were. I remember two were in the living room still, but they were kind of going in and out of the house on phones. I remember them talking to each other, kind of giving codes, like numbers. They were in the house, out the house, on the phone. Then whilst I was upstairs feeding [REDACTED], I remember Mum was looking out the window and she said, "They're covering everything in your garden with polythene." For some reason I just kept saying, "Shek's dead. Shek's dead." I don't know why I was thinking that. I don't know why I was saying that, but I was adamant that I thought Shek was dead, and Mum was saying, "Don't be silly. Don't be daft. Just feed [REDACTED] and we'll get down to the police station and find out what's going on."

11. I am asked whether I recall it being any officers in particular going to and from the house. They were all walking around the house, but the two officers that were in the living room with us kept going outside on the phone and then coming back and then talking to each other, but it's all a blur now. I can't really remember the sequence of it. I just remember them coming in and out the house, and I remember when one of them had gone out on the phone, the

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other one was commenting about how [REDACTED] had a sniffly nose, like just making small chat.

12. I am asked whether I was asking the police officers questions about what was happening and if I did what their response was. Their response was just that it was better if we were to go down to the station and they would speak to us there, but I did obviously keep asking, "Do you know where Shek is? Where is he? What's happened? Is he okay?" But they didn't really answer. They just said, "We're not sure what's happened because we've just come on shift and we're from the Methil area so if you just get a bag together, we can get down to the station and find out what's going on."

13. After I fed [REDACTED] and I got a bag together, I think we followed them to the police station in the car. They had said, "We will go in front and lead the way, if you just follow us." So, we started off heading towards the police station, but then at one point they stopped in front of us and kind of signalled for us to do a U-turn which we thought was a bit odd, but we just followed them.

**Attendance at Kirkcaldy Police Office and delivery of death message**

14. Once we were at the police station, we were waiting in the foyer, in the entrance, and I think we were waiting there for quite some time. I remember there was a poster up in the hallway about a missing [REDACTED] and me and Mum said, "I can't believe he's still missing." Then I remember the policeman that was at the desk saying, "His [REDACTED] didn't do him any favours by going so public with it all." Me and my mum were thinking, "Why would you say that?" We just thought it was very odd, but he was saying things like, "The [REDACTED] wasn't doing himself any favours. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] had got himself in trouble" and we were thinking, "He's lost his [REDACTED] of course he's going to do everything in his power to find him." We just thought it's a bit odd.

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15. Finally, when the police did come back, we were taken into a small room. I remember when we went in, looking to the left and seeing a room full of police officers and they were all looking at us. Then we were taken down to the right to a small room, but I didn't really think anything of it. Once we got taken into that small room, they were saying that Mum should leave the room and that she should take the baby. I said "No, my mum's staying." The officer had said that he should take [REDACTED] and I was saying, "You're not taking my baby. I just want to know what's going on with Shek. Where is he? What's happened?" I remember at one point, one of the officers saying about how [REDACTED] had a sniffly nose and that I should try a Calpol plug-in, and I just thought, "Why are you talking to me about my son's sniffly nose? I just want to know what's happened to Shek."

16. We sat down at the table and the officer said, "There's no easy way of saying this. I'm just going to say it. There's been a body found that matches your partner's description and we think it's Shek." I think I just collapsed at that point. I think I was just shouting and screaming. I think I was maybe jumping up and down. I was in disbelief. I was in shock, and then I think, once I calmed down a little bit and regained myself a little bit, I had said, "Well, what's happened to him, has he collapsed, has he got any wounds, has he been hurt, has he been stabbed? What's happened? Where was he found?" They just said that a passer-by had found him dead on the street.

17. I said, "Well, has he got wounds? Can you see what's happened? What's happened to him?" They just said that they weren't sure and that there was nothing that they could see, so no obvious wounds. So, then I was just adamant that I wanted to go and see him. I was asking where he was, and they wouldn't tell me where he was. They just kept saying they "didn't know what had happened to him. There was no obvious wounds. He hadn't been stabbed."

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18. I am asked whether, after they told me Sheku had died, whether they offered me any support or for you to have a break. No. I was crying and shouting, and they were just quiet. I think my mum was comforting me. I think once I settled down a little bit they then said, "I know this is really difficult for you but we're going to have to take a statement from you." I said "I'm not giving a statement. I just want to go and see Shek. Why would I need to give a statement? I just want to know what's happened." I remember them saying that they were looking for somebody in connection with it, but I can't really remember the sequence of when they had said that. I just remember when I was asking what's happened to him, they had said, "We are looking for somebody."

19. I am asked how I ended up giving the police a statement when I had said I did not want to give a statement. They had said that if I was to give a statement, then I would be able to go and see him because he would need to be identified. So, they had said, "If you get the statement done, then we'll see about you going to see him," and mum had kind of been saying, "Let's just do the statement and then maybe you'll get to see him after."

20. I remember them asking me if Shek had any tattoos or any scars. I don't know if that was to further identify him because they had said he would still need identified. He had scars on his arms, and he had a mark on his face from chicken pox, and it was in the shape of a shoe print. So they had said, "Yes, it does sound like the same man that had been found."

21. When I was giving my statement, they were asking all about our relationship. They were asking where I had been the night before, what we had done the day before, why was I staying at Mum's; they thought that was really strange. I remember them saying, "Had you had an argument? Why were you staying at your mum's?" I had to explain that that's just what we done. I was really close to Mum, so if Shek was ever going out and I wasn't going, I would just go and stay at Mum's and then me and my mum would have a girly time together, and then she also got to spend some time with [REDACTED]. But they just

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kept pushing that we had fallen out, that we'd had an argument and that's why I was staying. They were asking if me and Shek's relationship was a good relationship, if it was stable.

22. Then they asked questions about Shek himself, if he was religious; if he was a Muslim, how religious was he? Did he pray? How often did he pray? Did he drink? Did he eat bacon? I remember I wasn't really thinking. I just kept answering all these questions. They were asking if I got on well with his family. I was asked if his family had a problem with me being white. Did they have a problem with me not being a Muslim? Did Shek want me to become a Muslim? They were asking was Shek ever violent to me, they were asking if Shek was a violent person, if he had any enemies, if he had lots of friends, if he was popular, was there anybody out to hurt him, did he have anybody that would want to hurt him? I was saying, "No, Shek's the most gentle, most loving, most popular man. Nobody would want to hurt him. He had loads of friends, he was well-known in the community."

23. They had asked if I would be able to contact his sister. They had asked if he had had family here, and then they had asked if I would be able to tell his family. I said, "No." I said, "How am I supposed to go to his sister's and explain that her brother's dead? I don't even know what's happened."

24. I had also said that they would have to contact Connie, [REDACTED] mum, because he was due to see [REDACTED] that day. They had said that they would do that. They had asked for addresses and phone numbers, but I didn't have any of that. But I did say that his sister worked in the hospital, and you can maybe find out addresses from there. I think I may be passed on her contact number because I think I had her number, but I can't really remember.

25. I am asked how I felt about the questioning and how the police were treating me during the questioning. I don't think I thought anything of it because I just assumed that this was normal. I just assumed that these were routine

Signature of witness..... [REDACTED] .....



questions. I thought I was doing my best to give them all the information that would maybe help to find out what had happened to Shek, and I thought maybe they're just asking questions about us and about his friends and his religion to build up a picture about him which would then help them find out what had happened to Shek. I don't remember thinking that they were overly pushy, maybe they were pushy on some of the questions about his religion and if he drank and was, he a strict Muslim, and about the family. I did remember thinking that that was very strange, why they were asking about all that and if Shek wanted me to be a Muslim or if his family wanted me to be a Muslim? They had asked if we planned to get married and things like that. I am asked whether I told them Sheku was Muslim or whether they asked. I think they asked if he was a Muslim, if he was religious. There were a lot of questions about his religion and his family. They also asked lots of questions about whether he was a popular person, whether he got on with people; if he was violent, if anybody would want to hurt him. I just thought I was doing my bit to help them find out what was going on.

26. I am asked what happened when I got to the end of giving my statement to the police and whether I was given the opportunity to see Shek. That was my understanding, that they had said that they would be in touch with me so that I could go and see Shek. So, as I was leaving the police station, I was under the impression that Shek still needed to be identified and that they were going to be contacting me so that I could go and see him. When we finished the statement, I think they just thanked me for doing the statement and that they realised it had been difficult but that it was something we had to get out of the way. I think they said, "We just need to get that statement out of the way so that then he can be identified, and you'll get to see him." That did not happen. I am asked whether I was given the opportunity to read over and sign my statement. No, I don't think I did. I definitely didn't read it. I remember I got to read it when PIRC gave it to me.

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27. After the statement we were just expected to go home but I thought that I might need to get some frozen breast milk for [REDACTED] because I thought I might not be up to feeding [REDACTED] all the time. I remember driving to the house and there was police everywhere. I remember my mum was going to get the milk for me, but she got as far as the gate and then she was told that we weren't allowed in the house, it was a crime scene, and that anything that we needed from the house they would have to get for us. So, an officer did go into my freezer and got my get breast milk and brought it back to the car. I remember at that time going to my next-door neighbour because me and Shek were quite close to her and obviously there was a big police presence. I remember going to her and telling them that Shek had died and that to expect a large police presence because I think that they were going to find out what was going on. I think I explained to her that my house is now a crime scene. I just wanted her to know so that she didn't worry. I cannot remember the name of my neighbour anymore.

28. I am asked what the police said to me when we were at the house getting the milk. Did they offer to assist me in any way? I think we had to explain that I was going to be staying with my mum. So then when we got to the house, they were just quite adamant to Mum that we weren't allowed in. I remember asking for something of Shek's; I think I wanted a hoodie, but they wouldn't give me that. They allowed me to get the breast milk, but they didn't allow me to get anything else.

29. After that we went back to my mum's house. Then at some point when we were back at my mum's house, I think his sister, Kadi, had phoned me. I think we then just went down to KK's house. Shek called Kadi KK and so did I. I am asked whether Kadi knew Shek had died when we spoke on the phone. Yes, she did. I think they had said that an officer had gone to their house, but on the phone, there was just a lot of tears, a lot of crying, a lot of, "I can't believe it's him. I can't believe it." We went down and when we got to KK's house, I remember her saying that he died in the ambulance. I said to KK, "What

Signature of witness..... [REDACTED] .....

ambulance? They told me that he was dead on the street. Why was he in an ambulance?" Then KK said "What?" We were just confused. KK had said that police officers had come to her house to tell her and that they had said he died in an ambulance on the way to the hospital.

**Engagement with Police Scotland**

30. I am asked what the reaction was when we realised, we had both been given two different versions of what had happened. I remember KK being quite shocked and just saying, "No, no, no, no, no. This can't be true. It can't be." At that time, we were also just grieving. We were just crying. She asked, "What were you told?" I said that "he had been found dead in the street." I think Ade had said that they needed to get to the bottom of what had happened. I'm not sure if he asked for somebody to come to the house or if they were told that somebody was coming to the house. There were no police at the house when I arrived but there had been police there before I came.

31. The police came back that day when I was at the house. I can't remember the timings because things were just a blur. I was just on autopilot. I think they had said there had been a warrant out for Shek's arrest and I think it was then that they had said they had received phone calls about him, so they were going to arrest him. I am asked how we responded to that. Just very confused. We were just thinking, "I think they've got the wrong person" and "This is just not Shek at all." It just wasn't matching up, and I just remember thinking, "Maybe they've got the wrong person." I can't remember who had said what had happened. I remember them saying about a knife and I remember them saying that he was brandishing the knife. I think they were saying it was a machete, at first. I said, "Shek doesn't have a machete." Then I said, "I think I would know if there was a machete in my house." I think that's how we first got told. I think we were told that he was brandishing a machete around and that there was a warrant out for his arrest for that. Then we were just in disbelief.

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32. I think Ade had said at that point to get the chief of police because I think he worked with him, so he knew him. So, he was asking to see him. I think when he came to the house it was him who had said that it had been a forceful arrest, that CS spray and pepper spray had been used, that batons had been raised and used. I remember him saying that when they got there, Shek had gone towards them with the knife. I remember them saying that he had hit a female police officer, and I remember thinking, "There is absolutely no way that they are talking about Shek." I thought "There's no way that Shek would hurt a woman. There's no way that he would hit a woman." The thing about a knife, I was just thinking, "This is not Shek. This isn't the same person." Everybody in the room, there was quite a lot of us by that time, they were all saying the same thing "That's not Shek. Shek wouldn't do that. He wasn't violent."

33. I am asked how I felt the senior officer was treating the family when he came to deliver the information. I can't really remember. I think he was just telling us the information. I feel like he was a bit unsure of the information that he was giving. I can't remember. When we're getting that information, I wasn't looking at how he was because I was just getting all this information. From my recollection, I remember shouting, "So you battered him to death." This chief of police, I'll always remember, he just shrugged his shoulders. When he did that, I was very, very angry. I remember standing up and shouting, "You're not going to get away with this." I was in hysterics at this point. I was crying, very angry, so I went through to another room. Since then, I have spoken to my mum about what happened and now know that it wasn't me that had said that. It was my mum who had said, "You killed him," and then it was me that had said, "You're not going to get away with this." In the moment of everything happening I just remember bits of what was said, because I just remember feeling like I was on a spinning wheel, and I couldn't really retain a lot of the information. I was just thinking, "This isn't happening."

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34. I am asked whether I recall the name of the senior officer. No, I don't. The name Garry McEwan is put to me, and I am asked whether that name is correct. Yes, that is correct.
35. I don't remember how he came to leave the house because I had to go into the other room because I was so angry. I remember people coming to check on me. I didn't see him leaving. I am asked about the discussions that took place after Garry McEwan left. There was a discussion about, "We need to get a lawyer," and then I don't really remember anything. I remember somebody saying if I needed anything from the house that I was to make a list. I don't think it was the police. It was somebody else who was making sure that I was getting what I needed, and it was then that I had asked for a hoodie of Shek's and a pillow. I don't know if Aamer was involved by that time. I am asked whether that was happening on 3 May 2015. Yes, either that day or the next. Honestly, I can't remember. It was all such a blur.
36. I am asked about family liaison officers and whether I remember any engagement with them. Yes. I remember the family liaison officers, and maybe it was them who had said, "If you get a list of everything that you want," but I remember not liking them. I felt like they were just there to watch us to gather information. I didn't feel like they were supportive. I really didn't like them. I am asked whether they were from the police or the PIRC. Something is telling me the PIRC. Yes, I think they were sent from PIRC because they told us that PIRC were going to be coming to speak to us.
37. I can't remember when we left Kadi's house but at some point me, my mum and [REDACTED] all went home. I am asked whether I had a contact for Police Scotland at this time. No, I didn't have anything because when I went back to my mum's I remember saying, "I just want to see him. I just want to see him," and thinking, "I thought they were going to phone me. Why have they not phoned me to go and see him?" I think KK had been told that they were going

Signature of witness.....[REDACTED].....

to be getting to see him as well, so I think we were both waiting to go and see him.

38. I am asked about what happened the next day and whether I had any further discussions with Police Scotland or the PIRC. I can't remember. I can't remember when they got involved, what I'd done the next day, where I was. After we were told, I just remember being really busy, a lot was happening, a lot of people were coming in and out of the house. I was in survival mode. I wasn't really paying attention to anything that was happening. I was just kind of doing as I was told.

39. I am asked whether I remember when I got my house back. I don't, but I never really went back to the house because I couldn't. It was too upsetting for me to go back to the house. I think I only ever went back to the house to get things of Shek's for my own comfort and things for me and the baby, but I never really spent much time down there after that.

40. I don't think I had any more involvement with the police. I think once Garry McEwan had come, we didn't have any interaction with the police. I think it was then PIRC, and Aamer, and the family liaison officers, but I don't remember the family liaison officers being around for very long, because I don't think any of us really got on with them. I think we asked whether we had to be involved with them. I just remember them being very rude and quite aggressive. I just remember thinking, "I just wish you would go away. I don't want you anywhere near me." I didn't get the sense that they were there to help. They would ask us questions. I just remember thinking they didn't want to be with us, and we didn't want them to be with us. I remember thinking "They don't want to be here either." I just remember that whenever they would come the house, every time they would leave, I would be very angry.

41. I am asked whether I fed back those feelings to Aamer Anwar. Yes, and I think Aamer was under the same frustration with them as well, and I think

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that's when they were told to not come back and that Aamer was going to be looking after us. So, I'm not sure if PIRC had come and then Aamer got involved, because it was after Aamer got involved that we didn't really see them. I can't remember, it's just been so long.

**Post Mortem**

42. I am asked whether I recall any discussions about the need to have a post - mortem. Yes. They had explained that he would need to be identified and that he would need to have a post-mortem, and I remember saying, "Well, I want to see him before he has his post-mortem," and they were very reassuring. The police were saying, "Don't worry about that because he needs to be identified first. Nothing can happen to his body until he's identified, so you will get to see him because you need to identify him." I remember them being really reassuring about that, really reassuring that no post-mortem can take place until he is identified. Then I remember it was planned that we were all going to go and see Shek, because we were waiting for his mum to arrive and his sisters, and then we were all going to go together to see him. The post-mortem couldn't go ahead until he was identified by his mum and the family, and at this point we would get to see him. I think it was either KK or Ade who had said that his mum and sisters were coming and that nobody could go and see him until they had seen him. I did remember thinking "I just want to go and see him now" but I understood that we had to wait for his mum and then we would all see him and his post mortem could then be done.

43. I am asked whether that was an assumption we made or whether someone had been in contact with Police Scotland to advise that the family were travelling, and they needed to wait. Yes. I'm sure KK and Ade had explained to them that his mum was coming up and that we were waiting on them before anyone could see him.

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44. I found out that the post mortem had already taken place when we were in Aamer's office. I can't remember who was there, whether his mum and sisters had arrived by that point. I remember the day because it was a busy office and that someone had received a phone call to say that the post-mortem had taken place. Then there was a massive ruckus. We were thinking "But he hasn't been identified. We haven't seen him. Why have they gone ahead and done this post-mortem? They've not had permission to do that." I was distraught. I was so upset. I was very upset, and I was very, very angry, and I was really confused. There was a lot of anger because we were reassured that we would get to see him, and that a post-mortem couldn't take place until he was identified. He hadn't been identified yet so why had the post-mortem gone ahead?

45. I remember there was a lot of shouting, a lot of crying, a lot of hurt and a lot of phone calls being made. I just remember it being really chaotic.

46. I remember a few hours later, maybe, or the same afternoon, somebody in that room got a phone call from the embassy back in Africa, in Sierra Leone, saying that they had had a phone call about Shek, that Shek had died and "Would they accept his body because he didn't even have family here?" Shek's dad used to be the secretary to the president at one point. They had the same name, so that when Shek's name was brought up, they recognised the name from his dad. Then they started asking a lot of questions, saying that he did have family, "How did he die?" and I think after that their phone call had all gone silent. I remember thinking, "Why are they phoning the embassy when they know that he's got family here? Why are they asking if they would accept his body?" I remember at the time there was Ebola in Sierra Leone, and then later on thinking, "He would have just got put in an unmarked grave because there were so many deaths of Ebola." I think at that point I was thinking, "Something's not right. Why are they trying to take his body away from us?"

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47. I am asked whether I got to see Sheku in the days after we received the news the post-mortem had taken place. No. Nobody was allowed to see him until a good few weeks later, I'm sure, and we were told that we could go and view him, but at that point I didn't want to because I wanted to see Shek for how he was, not after he's had a post-mortem. To me, I didn't know what he was going to look like. I didn't want to see him with stitches. I didn't want to remember him like that. So, his family did go and see him, but I didn't.

### **Engagement with the PIRC**

48. I am asked about my engagement with the PIRC and whether I had any meetings with the PIRC and how those meetings went. I do remember speaking to PIRC. I do remember giving statements to them. I don't remember having any feelings about them. I think I was very wary because we were aware that PIRC were made up of ex-police officers. I remember not really liking them, but I was very defensive after what has happened. I remember going to a meeting with Kate Frame, the head of PIRC. I feel those meetings went really badly. I remember being very, very angry. I remember them almost being blasé about what had happened and me being really angry and defensive because they didn't seem to show any emotion or care. I just remember being very angry because I remember we had been told all about his injuries when we were at the meeting with Kate Frame. I remember them saying that there was no evidence to suggest that they would have to look at the measures that were used, the way that he was restrained. I remember shouting at her, "If this was a member of the public who had all these injuries, somebody would be held accountable for it," and then I remember her saying that the injuries that Shek had received were kind of normal. I remember thinking, "What?" and I remember saying, "If Shek hadn't

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got in contact with the police that day, he'd still be here." I remember Kate Frame almost laughing at my anger, which made me more angry. She just seemed very ignorant and arrogant to it all. I felt a lot of the time with PIRC that they were insinuating that everything had all been Shek's fault and that the restraint and things that were used were his fault.

49. I think I am doing well until I think back to something that I don't usually thinking about, and it makes me angry at how they tried to villainise Shek so much and blame him for what happened. I am asked whether that is something I think the PIRC were doing. Yes.

50. I remember even when we were first told about what had happened that we were told not to talk to the press, and then I remember a story coming out about it, but we had been told not to talk about it, and then it was in the press. I just remember how they were portraying Shek and it not being very fair. How they were portraying him was totally not the man that he was, and I remember thinking it was so unfair that we weren't allowed to talk to the press, but the police were giving out all this information to paint him out and what had happened, and we were still kind of finding out what was happening. We were still having trust in them that they were looking into everything that had happened, but then they had given out all these details that we didn't know.

51. I also remember when I was at that meeting with Kate Frame that they had said that when Police Scotland amalgamated that they had "inherited bad apples," but because they'd all come together there was nothing that could be done. I think at the time we knew that Alan Paton had a lot of complaints made against him. I was saying, "If in any other job somebody's not meeting their role or doing wrong, they are punished, or they're sacked, or whatever." Then they were just saying, "Yes, there are some bad apples in Police Scotland, but because we've all amalgamated together, we can't do anything about it." I just remember thinking, "If someone's not doing their job properly,

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if they've got so many complaints against them, why have they still got that job?" I remember her being snide with me. I just felt like she thought that I was stupid. She did not show me respect.

52. I am asked whether I have any recollection of the instruction of experts and how I felt this was done by PIRC. Yes, I remember there being chat about the experts and that we were getting our own experts as well, and that the experts that they were using were all of a police background. I remember thinking that the experts that they were choosing weren't fair and they wouldn't look at the whole holistic picture. I remember them choosing experts that would coincide with what they were saying about the drugs and the delirium and things. I think we felt like the experts that they were choosing weren't going to be transparent. We were thinking that they were going down this route of excited delirium, and that they were choosing all these experts that would back that up. We felt that they were using experts that would coincide with what they had been trying to say.

**Engagement with the Lord Advocate and COPFS**

53. I am asked about any meetings I attended with the Lord Advocate. I remember a lot of those meetings where I was very angry because they would always talk about the restraint being proportionate, or the right amount of violence and the right amount of restraint was used. I remember being so angry, thinking, "But it's not normal. What happened wasn't normal protocol. You know, him being hit on the head by a baton, being approached from the back and all of them being on him." At the time I think we were aware that some of them were jumping on his legs and lying on top of him, and I remember thinking, "How is that proportionate?" I remember thinking, "What more information do you need? If you know what I know, how do you not think that this is something that needs to have charges against?" I just remember being really angry, and I do remember at a meeting there was a

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comment made, and I can't remember what the comment was now, but I just remember totally losing it because it was almost, "He'd done it himself," or "He brought it on himself." I am asked if that comment was made by the Lord Advocate himself. It was made by the Lord Advocate, and I think it was something like "He brought it on himself" or "He has done this to himself." I remember flying off the handle and shouting and being really angry. I stopped going to the meetings with the Lord Advocate shortly after that because it wasn't helping my mental health at the time.

54. I am asked whether I attended meetings with both Lord Advocates, Frank Mulholland and James Wolffe. I only attended meetings with Frank Mulholland. I did not have any interactions with James Wolffe. I think it was shortly after that meeting that I said, "I can't have anything more to do with them," because I remember Aamer saying, "We've got to have faith in this," and I remember thinking, "I don't have faith in anybody. I don't trust anybody. I don't believe anything's going to happen." Then when I was attending the meetings, I left angry. I didn't leave feeling any better. I felt worse and, a lot of the times, very angry.

55. When we attended the meetings, they would always say they were really sorry and they empathised with us, but I remember thinking "No, you don't." I thought it was just words. I just didn't think enough was going on because I remember thinking "Well, if you are sorry then you'll do something about it, and you are not doing anything about it." I remember expressing that in the meetings and I remember when I was told that it will go on and on saying "I am not doing this for years and years. I want to know what happened to him. I don't want [redacted] to be at school and we still don't know exactly what's happened to his dad" and here we are, seven years later.

56. I remember them saying that there was a lot to look at, it was a complex case, and then I just remember thinking, "What's so complex? If Shek hadn't got in contact with the police that day, he would still be here. What's so

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confusing? You know all his injuries. You know how many were on top of him. I don't think that's proportionate. I don't think hitting somebody on the head with a baton is proper procedure. What's so difficult?" I just remember feeling like they were just dragging their heels a lot. I stepped back from the meetings but was kept up to date on meetings by Aamer.

57. I am asked how I found out about the decision not to prosecute any of the officers. I think it was Aamer who told me. I remember being really really angry but then also not surprised. I am asked whether Aamer told me the decision had come out in the press. Yes. I want to say the press found out before us that no criminal charges were going to come. I wasn't surprised because I had been let down and I didn't have any trust in the police. I didn't have any trust in the Lord Advocate. I didn't have any trust in anybody, because any meeting or anything that I went to, I left feeling deflated. I didn't really feel like anything was ever going to happen, and then the fact that that had come out in the paper before us as a family knew didn't surprise me at all, because there had been so many lies, and things put into the press. Why wouldn't they just go and tell the press that there was going to be no criminal charges before telling us? They didn't give us respect at any point along the way, so why would they start now?

58. I am asked how I felt in general about how Police Scotland, the PIRC and COPFS dealt with the investigation and how they treated me. I just remember that they were really deliberate on trying to give a really bad picture of who Shek was, what had happened, and there were so many lies told that had come from the police. They were really going to town on Shek's character and even myself. There were stories in the media about me that weren't true. I feel like they kind of went after us to try and paint a picture that would help them.

**Media Engagement**

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59. I am asked how I thought the stories were in the media. It was the police. Things came out that now we know are not true: about him having a knife; that he'd gone towards the police with the knife, and now we know that that wasn't true; that he had chased, kicked, and stamped on Nicole Short, there's just no space for that to happen; that he was a big, massive, six-foot-odd man built like a house when he wasn't. He was five foot ten and weighed 12 and a half stone.

60. I think it was Peter Watson who briefed the press about this. They were trying to make him out to be something that he wasn't. In my opinion it was to portray an image of Shek as a really big, dangerous man because there was a lot of concentration on: "Shek, he was really, really big; he was really large," and then "Nicole Short's so very petite." But I'm pretty sure that me and Nicole Short are the same size, if not she's a little bit smaller than me, and there wasn't much difference between me and Shek. Then to describe him as "incredibly large, he's the largest male you've ever seen," when the officers that were there were much larger than what he was. Why do they then think that he's incredibly large? Why are you thinking that he's so big, when in reality his physical appearance is not what is being described? They were almost trying to make him out to be a monster and really concentrate on this excited delirium and the drugs that they were using, and I just felt like they were concentrating on everything apart from the fact that they had used the batons, used the spray, were jumping on his legs, were lying across his chest.

61. I feel like they were trying to be stereotypical of a big scary black man. I can't understand why they think he's so large. I don't understand their terminology in describing Shek because it is far from the truth. In my opinion, that image was portrayed to the public to excuse what the police had done: "Because he was so huge, they couldn't control him, he was massive and that's why it took six officers to restrain him." I am asked whether I think there was racism in


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the portrayal of Sheku. I think so. They did describe him as black, and he is black, but it's almost the stereotypes that they were using, that he was incredibly large when he wasn't incredibly large. To me, I just feel like they are met with so many different types of people every single day, they deal with people who are under the influence of drugs and alcohol, and they are able to arrest them fine. Why was it such a challenge for Shek?

62. The facts weren't coming out, but there were little things, like the chasing of Nicole Short and the knife, that were being placed in the media. The press were told that Nicole Short was chased down the street, and we know from the CCTV and the statements that there just probably wasn't enough time for that to happen. This is all going into the press, and the public are then reading this and taking it as correct information. There was a lot of attention on Nicole Short's injuries, which were minimal. There was a lot of concentration on: "Nicole Short, petite female officer," and her injuries. There wasn't enough attention on Shek and his injuries. Sheku Bayoh was dead. They described Shek as a "zombie" and having "superhuman strength." Obviously to the family, that's really upsetting. He's not a zombie, he's a human. You could just say that he was unresponsive. Why do you have to describe him in such a detrimental manner?

63. The press were also briefed, I think it was after a press conference, the press were briefed that Shek was part of genocide in Sierra Leone. I think Shek was about 8 when that happened. I am asked whether I recall whether this was online. Yes, it was online. It was reported. I think it was The Sun because The Sun wrote multiple lies, but that had come from the press; the toxicology report was leaked to the press, as was the fact that he was part of genocide. I think it was after the meeting with Kate Frame that we received a call from The Sun, or I think Aamer received a call from somebody about a story that was leaked about me and Zahid having an affair, and this was why Shek and Zahid were fighting. The story was one completely made up and totally false and defamation of me and Zahid's character, but it also tried to put a lot of the

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blame onto Zahid for the injuries that he had. Zahid always said that he didn't hit him back. To try and say that all these injuries happened because of the fight that he had with Zahid, after admitting to using batons and sitting on his torso and jumping on his legs and having him face down, striking him with batons, it's unfair to put all that blame and try to deflect away from what the police actually done. I just don't know where they even got that story from. It's appalling.

64. I think the story was in the press because we had had this meeting with Kate Frame. It was to try to take the limelight away from that meeting with Kate Frame.

65. Even now, people listening to the Inquiry and finding things out, they just believe what they initially read in those reports. They still think that Shek was this big crazy guy, that he had a knife at the time that the police arrived. I just feel like they did everything they could to try and tarnish his name and paint him out to be something that he wasn't, and to put out facts that weren't facts just to kind of take the attention off of what they had done.

66. I am asked whether I have anything else to add regarding how things were portrayed in the media. Yes. I wanted to add that Calum Steele had retweeted a gif about Shek mocking him, and he then shared the link to The Sun about me and Zahid having an affair. So this gif on Twitter, it was something like: "This is more what happened on the morning and nothing else," and it was a picture, like a short video, of a man slapping another man, and then it had said: "Don't remember, Don't forget about this," or something like that. It was trying to say that what happened between Shek and the police that morning was the slap in the face, and: "Don't forget about this little snippet of absolute false information about the affair, and that the injuries were probably more sustained from the fight that he had with Zahid." I was so disgusted that this had come from Calum Steele. It made me so mad. The

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audacity of it to come from him, to try and mock what happened to Shek like it is a joke. This is our family member. This isn't a gif. This isn't funny. We don't deem what happened that morning as a "slap in the face." He is dead. How dare you write that. How dare you share that.

67. Shek was dehumanised from the very first press briefing. For the family, that's really disrespectful and hurtful, and it's completely unnecessary. I don't know why you have to try and attack somebody like that, who's dead. They can't speak up for themselves.

68. Peter Watson gave a statement saying: "He presented a violent interface with the police." That's a quote from him that was given to a paper. As far as I'm aware, ignoring orders is not violent. He was met with violence, but to put this into the paper, it makes the public believe he was really violent and that this is what happened, because he was violent, but he wasn't violent. It then goes on to say: "Clearly the fact he now appears to have consumed drugs that affected his behaviour, that makes a great deal of sense in understanding this tragic incident." From the very beginning, he was totally blaming the drugs that he had taken, and totally deflecting from the restraint.

69. To concentrate on the drugs that he had taken, and they said: "If you take this drug, it can make you have superhuman strength; it could make you tear your clothes off; it could--" you know writing all these things in the press for the public to then read. He said that he's violent; he said that these drugs can do this to you. That must be what he was like on that morning. But that's not what he was like on that morning. Yes, he had taken drugs; yes, he was acting in a non-normal way, but does that mean that he gets to be batted and sprayed and held down and sat on and legs jumped on. Is that restraint actually legal? There was just so much emphasis on: "He had superhuman strength. He was incredibly large." They concentrated so much on that and dehumanised him, called a zombie.

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70. I am asked how this all affected me. It really affected my anxiety because they were describing somebody that I loved in a way that just wasn't true. It was then up to us, as the family and friends, to try and stick up for Shek and come against what was said about him. You're up against a brick wall because the police are feeding these lies to the press, which we are then having to say: "No, that's not true," but they've already read that. They're going to believe what the police have said because, before this happened, I believed what the police would say. It's hard enough to lose somebody you love without then having to constantly defend their character, to then have to be up against an investigation. I think that if something like this happens, the police shouldn't be allowed to use words like "zombie," they shouldn't be allowed to use words like "superhuman strength." Why not just report on the facts of what happened? You don't have to assassinate his character.

71. It's hard to lose somebody you love, but then when they're constantly attacked, and there's no way for you to stand up and say "That's not true--" because your word is against the word of the police. I recently had counselling, and I've got PTSD, and I had said to the counsellor: "I feel like I've got this massive weight on my shoulders because I have to try and let everybody else know what a wonderful man that Shek was because it's been put in the press that he was horrible." I don't want that for Shek because he's not here, so it's on me to make sure everybody else knows that he was a kind man, he was a loving man, he was a gentleman all the time, he was really friendly. He wasn't a zombie.

72. Not everyone is going to follow the Inquiry. These people have formed their opinions of what happened from that initial briefing that they were given, the initial news that they read. People are still of the opinion that Shek was dangerous, that he chased Nicole Short down the street; that the police had no other option but to respond in how they did. They are all going to still believe that Shek was completely in the wrong. I understand that Shek was in

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the wrong; I understand that he took drugs; I understand that he had a knife, but at the time that the police came to him, he did not have a knife. It's just those initial press releases that have planted a seed in everybody's minds, and it's hard to get away from that, and the Inquiry has come seven years later. People might have cared about it then, but people don't have the same want or need for the information and the truth now because seven years have gone past.

**Previous statements**

73. I am asked about something I said in my statement to the PIRC<sup>1</sup>. I am asked about me correcting some inaccuracies in my police statement. I am asked about the statement "at no time did I state to anyone within the Police Service that Sheku as intending to watch a boxing match" and whether I said that. Yes because they did keep saying about him going to watch this boxing match. I had said, "That wasn't his intention. He wasn't talking about watching the boxing match. He had said that it was on but there was no way for him to be watching it because you had to pay for it, and we didn't have the service for them to watch it." Shek and Zahid were just chilling in the house, having a drink, and listening to music. When I spoke to Shek he was at his niece's birthday part. When he phoned me, he never mentioned anything about the boxing. He had just said that they were at [REDACTED] party and that they were going to be leaving shortly to just go back to the house and chill and listen to music and just chill, that's what they always done. But I remember the police saying about the boxing and they kept saying, "So he was watching the boxing." I said, "No, he wasn't watching the boxing."

74. I am asked about a further section of my PIRC statement in which I say "The police statement makes reference to a drawer in the kitchen of my home

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<sup>1</sup> PIRC 00028

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address that contains knives and cutlery. I wish to point out that I made it absolutely clear to the police that the drawer did not contain knives and that you stated this to the police on several occasions.” I am asked to confirm that that remains my position. Yes, because I remember getting to read over my statement that I’d given to the police. When I had gone into the house my kitchen top drawer was open, and I remember them saying, “Oh, so this’ll be where you keep your knives”, and I said, “No, we didn’t keep our knives in that drawer. We kept our knives in the second drawer down. The top drawer was just cutlery.” I remember they kept saying about the knives, and I said “But that’s not where I keep my knives. That’s not the drawer that was open.” Then when I got my statement back to read, it had said that the drawer containing the knife was open, and I thought “I cannot believe that they wrote that because that’s not what I said.” I, for some reason, kept repeating, “That’s not my drawer with the knives.” At the police station I didn’t know anything that had happened, and I don’t know why I was making such a point of saying, “But that’s not my knife drawer.” I don’t know why I was saying that.

75. I am asked about a further section of my PIRC statement in which I say, “The police statement further states that fridge magnets were all over the kitchen floor.” I am asked about the fact that I have already said the fridge magnets were in the garden. I am asked why it says in the statement that they were on the kitchen floor? Could there have been any on the kitchen floor as well? I think there maybe was some on the floor and then out into the garden because I just remember thinking, “How on earth have all my fridge magnets gotten all the way out into the garden?” I think I had said that there were some on the floor and some out in the garden because, now I think about it, there were some on the floor and then all over the garden. But I would have said that to the police, that they were in the garden as well, because that’s what I remember to be the strangest thing.

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76. I am asked about a section in my PIRC statement in which I say “The police statement also makes the following point. I thought it safer to get my mum. I drove to Glenrothes to get my mum and returned home. This section of the police statement does not reflect matters accurately. I had no concerns regarding my safety. Quite simply, I was going home in order to get my son.” I am asked whether, given I have explained the calls I received from Zahid expressing some concerns, that I did not have any concerns for myself at all. No, because, like I said, Shek was not a violent person. He wouldn’t even as much as raise his voice to me. So, when he was saying that I was just thinking, “Well, I’m going to go and see him anyway.” I wasn’t worried about anything at all because he wouldn’t even raise his voice. I wasn’t thinking that he was going to hurt me because I don’t believe he ever would hurt a woman or me.

77. I am asked if my previous statement to the PIRC should be preferred over details that I cannot recall at this stage. Definitely. To explain, I was recently diagnosed with PTSD, and I have been a psychologist. Some things are really vivid in my memory, but other things are just now.

78. 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.

Date..... January 24, 2023 | 12:25 PM GMT  
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