

Criminalising dissent in the ‘war on terror’: The British state’s reaction to the Gaza protests of 2008-09

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Dawn raids and 'Muslim fanatics'



- ❑ Nadifa: *'I don't feel that I have a private life at all after that ... I feel like I was assaulted'*
- ❑ Mustafa: *'They made me look like a fanatic, a lunatic ... I was absolutely terrified'*

From 'Operation Cast Lead' to 'Operation Ute



- 27 December 2008 - 20 January 2009
- Goldstone Report (2009) – 1,417 Palestinians and 13 Israelis killed during conflict

From 'Operation Cast Lead' to 'Operation Ute'



3 January 2009:
'it was really scary ... it was absolutely sickening, you just thought, 'this isn't going to end until someone dies'' (Interview with injured protester, 7/7/2009).

From ‘Operation Cast Lead’ to ‘Operation Ute



“...he said, ‘you’re not British, you don’t have respect for this country, you don’t understand the laws of this country’, I said, ‘I told you I’m British’, and he said ‘this is the Queen’s country and you should obey our rules’ (Interview with arrested protester, 23/2/2010).

Operation Ute: offences charged

Offence	No. charged
Violent Disorder	126
Burglary, non-dwelling	6
Burglary with intent to steal	4
Receiving stolen goods	2
Handling stolen goods	2
ABH	2
Possession of a knife blade	2
Possess class B drugs	2
Assault PC	1
FTS	1
Total	148



Mass production of guilty pleas

People were raided individually, it was very isolating, and it was kept quiet ... There were individuals who were young, Muslim, and who did not have a clear connection with an organization being picked off, often not represented [by a lawyer]. This leads to confessions through fear and isolation in the courts

(Interview with criminal defence solicitor, 6/7/2010).

The Bradford effect: ‘Muslim riots’ and deterrent sentencing

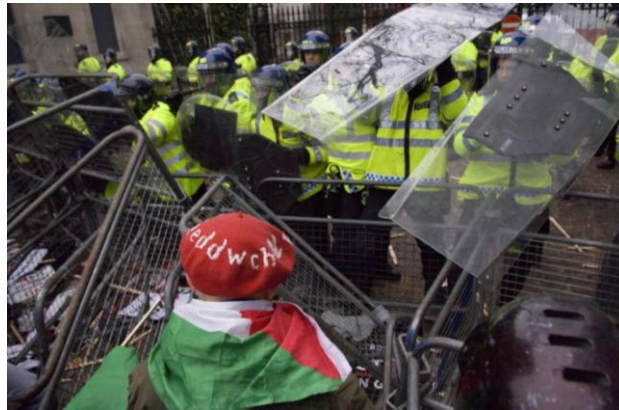
It is not just the individual conduct of a single offender which is important, it is the nature of the offending as a whole. Every individual who takes part by their deed or encouragement is guilty of an offence. Everyone who takes part does so at their peril a deterrent sentence is necessary. The public are entitled to look to the law for protection.

Judge John Denniss.

Operation Ute: Sentencing

Level of Sentence	Number of people
>18 months custody	15
12-18 months custody	10
6-12 months custody	3
<6 months custody	2
Suspended sentence	16
Community Order / Referral	5
Discharge	3
Total	54

Policing the police



- ❑ 33 official complaints
- ❑ 6 Civil actions
 - *'I trust that any future dealings that you have with the MPS are more positive'* (DI Adrian Baxter, Professional Standards, MPS)

‘Saddamites’ and ‘wannabe jihadists’



Fanatic: Abu Hamza

LIVING OFF THE STATE

ABU Hamza's family have enjoyed huge benefit payments thanks to the taxpayer.

His wife and eight children have been living in a £600,000 five-bedroom council house in Shepherd's Bush, in West London and drawing £680 a week in state handouts.

All the Hamza children are British-born, meaning they are entitled to support from the state.

At one time, the family

received a weekly income comprising of £351 in dependent children's allowance, £97 child benefit, £56 lone parent allowance and a £16 family premium.

The rent of £120 per week and council tax of £42 per week was also paid by the taxpayer.

Hamza, who lost his hand in an explosion in Afghanistan, is said to have cost the public purse £3.5million, including £1.1million in legal aid.

Is it because he is Muslim?

- ... You can see that there is a sense of unhappiness in the family, a sense that a disaster has happened, a disaster that needs settling. And although [Kabir] is out now, still not everything is settled, we are still thinking about the future. Of course we are not used to this so it upset us a lot. Also for me, it was the sense of injustice hurting me, I feel a lot this sense of injustice, about why this should happen to him. Usually you would not be put in prison for this – why was he? Is it because he is Muslim? That is hurting me a lot.

(Interview with father of imprisoned protester, 11/6/2010).