

One Year Later Relatives of Brazilian Slain by London Police Feel no Closure

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Family and friends of a Brazilian man who was mistaken by London police officers for a terrorist and killed inside a subway station in this capital gathered Saturday, at the site of the tragedy on the one-year anniversary of his death.

They came to honor the memory of Jean Charles de Menezes, a 27-year-old electrician who died July 22, 2005, after being shot several times in the head at close range.

"It's a day of remembrance and a day of much pain for his loved ones," said family spokesman Assad Rehman.

The entrance to the Stockwell subway station in south London where the killing occurred was filled Saturday with flowers and messages for de Menezes, who was killed a day after a series of failed bombing attempts in London on the heels of those that killed more than 50 people and wounded more than 700 others here on July 7, 2005.

Four of de Menezes' cousins - Alex and Alessandro Pereira, Patricia Armani and Vivienne Figueiredo - attended the memorial and observed a moment of silence in honor of their relative.

"We hope that nothing like this happens again and we pray for peace, love and justice," said Brazilian priest José Osvaldo, who celebrated a Mass in the honor of the deceased.

After the ceremony, de Menezes' cousins, who were visibly shaken, paid a final tribute by retracing the last steps the victim took before his death.

Rehman said that it has been a difficult year for the de Menezes family: "They're still not close to knowing the truth about why Jean died. That is very sad for them."

Britain's Crown Prosecution Service announced Monday that no charges would be filed against individual officers involved in the operation that led to de Menezes' death, citing insufficient evidence. The prosecutors said, however, that the Metropolitan Police force will be charged under health and safety laws for not fulfilling its obligation to protect the victim.

Afterward, the de Menezes' family called the decision not to prosecute individual officers "absolutely unbelievable" and criticized authorities for "taking so much time" to reach "such an incompetent" conclusion.

The victim was followed by undercover Special Branch officers on the morning of July 22, 2005, after emerging from a block of flats in the South London neighborhood of Tulse Hill that was under surveillance by counter-terrorism units. He then took a bus to the Stockwell subway station.

Initially, police said de Menezes was behaving suspiciously in the Stockwell station and disobeyed orders to halt, bolting instead into a crowded subway car, where officers tackled him and shot him to death, fearing that he might be a suicide bomber.

Information leaked from the Independent Police Complaints Commission, or IPCC, however, revealed that the young man calmly entered the metro station with a ticket and had just sat down in a subway car when a police officer grabbed him and threw him to the floor, where another officer shot him eight times at point-blank range in the head and upper body.

That commission still has not made public its two reports on what transpired on that fateful day.

Earlier this month, the BBC reported that the IPCC had recommended in one of the reports that two firearms officers and Cressida Dick, the officer responsible for the operation, be charged with homicide.

The British daily The Guardian, meanwhile, reported Saturday that it gained access to documents related to the investigation that revealed that the shooting occurred even though officers in charge of the operation intended that he be taken into custody alive.

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