

Bhatt Murphy Solicitors

PRESS RELEASE

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HOME OFFICE SETTLE DISCRIMINATION CLAIM ARISING OUT OF UNLAWFUL STOP

The Home Office has settled a claim brought by a British woman of Croatian descent who was stopped and surrounded in South London by Metropolitan police officers. She was then referred to a Home Office immigration officer for an immigration check which confirmed her to be British. The stop took place during a joint operation called 'Operation Condor' between the Metropolitan Police and the Home Office, the stated purpose of which was to crack down on licensing issues. It was the Claimant's case that the only explanation for her prolonged stop was that she did not have a British accent, which amounted to discrimination and harassment. The claim against the Home Office was settled in return for the payment of damages and without an admission of liability. The claim against the Commissioner of the Police for the Metropolis continues.

The Claimant gave the following comment:

"I have serious concerns that the Metropolitan police and Home Office abuse their powers by regularly stopping and questioning individuals who have committed no crime other than appearing 'foreign'. I hope that this small victory on my part will encourage others to refuse to accept similar treatment".

Sophie Naftalin, solicitor for the Claimant said:

"It is unacceptable that my client was subject to an intimidating and prolonged stop simply by virtue of her accent. There was nothing whatsoever about her behaviour which justified suspicion. The police and the Home Office must discharge their functions in a fair and non-discriminatory manner. This case is concerning, particularly as it is not an isolated incident and the Commissioner has elected to defend his officers' behaviour.

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