

STATEMENT ON CONCLUSION OF THE INQUEST INTO THE DEATH OF JACK MERRITT

Over the past seven weeks, a jury sitting in Covid-compliant conditions at the Guildhall in the City of London heard the details of a terrorist attack carried out by Usman Khan at the Fishmongers' Hall, near London Bridge, in which Jack Merritt and Saskia Jones were killed.

Khan, a convicted terrorist who had been released from prison on licence in December 2018, launched his attack just before 2pm on 29th November 2019 at a prisoner education and rehabilitation event organised by Learning Together, a part of the University of Cambridge.

The inquests into Jack and Saskia's deaths are the first in which a jury has been tasked with determining the facts about the deaths of victims in a terrorist attack. *For details of the evidence heard by the jury, see 'Notes to Editors' below.*

Jack's family read out the following statement outside the Guildhall:

"Jack Merritt, our son, was a good man doing good work, helping people less fortunate than him to improve their education and their self-esteem, through the Learning Together programme of the University of Cambridge. Following his death, we received many letters from serving and former prisoners he had worked with, telling us how Jack had a positive impact on their lives. Jack understood the factors that had led many of the people he worked with to end up in prison, and he understood the value of kindness and friendship in helping damaged people repair their lives; Jack would have described himself proudly as woke, the opposite, by definition, being ignorant. Jack was a do-gooder in the very best sense of the term.

This inquest has answered many of our questions about how Jack came to be killed. It is clear to us that the arrangements put in place for managing Usman Khan after his release from prison in 2019 were not fit for purpose, despite the authorities having had six years to plan for this from the time his sentence was changed from an indeterminate sentence to an extended sentence in 2013. The MAPPA process did not operate effectively; roles and responsibilities were unclear, communication between the agencies was inadequate and leadership and coordination were weak. The Probation and Police teams directly responsible for Khan's supervision were staffed by officers with little or no experience of terrorism offenders. The security services and West Midlands Counter-Terrorism Police were complacent and passive in the face of Khan's extreme and continuing threat. We welcome the changes implemented by the Probation Service in the management of terrorism offenders post-release; specialist teams with a focus on terrorism, smaller caseloads, specialist training and experienced officers, and with access to psychological analysis of offenders as necessary.

We hope that all other agencies and organisations involved with Khan will learn the lessons highlighted by the inquest, and will make changes to their systems and working practices as appropriate.

Jack believed in the work he was doing with prisoners through Learning Together; he saw first-hand the transformative effect it had on the lives of prisoners and students alike. We support the work of Learning Together and we hope it continues in future, with due regard to the issues highlighted by the inquest.

We are sorry for Saskia's family, next to whom we have stood in solidarity and sorrow throughout this process.

We would like to thank our legal team, Kate Maynard, Nick Armstrong, Jesse Nicholls, and Lizzie Norton, for their expertise, their humanity and their good humour; they have helped us through the most difficult and traumatic time of our lives. Thank you also to DCI Dan Brown of the Metropolitan Police's Counter-Terrorism Unit, and his team, for an extremely thorough and professional investigation, and for his kindness and support. Thank you to Toby and Sue, our Police Family Liaison Officers, who have been with us from the start, and who could not have been kinder or more considerate.

We would like to thank the Coroner, His Honour Judge Lucraft QC, Counsel to the Inquest Mr Hough QC, and his team, for their professionalism in managing this very long and complex inquest. Finally, thank you to the members of the jury for giving up your time, and for all your hard work."

Kate Maynard, of Hickman & Rose, solicitor for Jack's family, said:

"For the first time, the conclusions of an inquest into a terrorist attack have been delivered by a jury, which has enabled the greatest public scrutiny possible of these preventable deaths.

Over seven weeks the jury heard, questioned and tested evidence from a wide variety of State agencies, official bodies and individuals, in order to reach detailed conclusions on how this tragedy was able to happen.

The jury's damning conclusions criticised the management of Khan in the community by the various agencies responsible for managing his risk, and they highlighted a terrifying official complacency towards Khan and the obvious risks he posed.

They pose urgent questions of the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) panel. The reviews and findings of the MAPPA and the Probation Serious Case Review were exposed to be significantly inadequate.

In examining the way that Khan was managed in the community, the jury identified failures across the board, by MAPPA in particular, and referred to a blind spot too Khan's unique risks. They also criticised the organisation and security measures at the event at Fishmongers' Hall with a lack of communication and accountability.

Overall, the jury – which paid an touching tribute to Jack and Saskia and assured the families of their careful scrutiny of the case - concluded that there was a woeful failure by state agencies to keep the public safe, that contributed to Jack and Saskia's death.

Similar deaths must be avoided in future, which requires agencies of the State to carefully review and learn from the jury's conclusions and immediately institute necessary reform."