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Inspecting policing  
in the public interest

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## **HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY PUBLISHES INTERIM REVIEW OF POLICE RESPONSE TO PUBLIC PROTEST**

A report published today by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC), highlights the need for police to plan and deliver police operations that safeguard the rights of individuals during protests.

Acknowledging the achievement of the Metropolitan Police Service on what, even by international standards, was a very demanding day, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Denis O'Connor, said:

“In significant respects, the police planned and responded effectively to three eventualities: security, notified protest and disorder. However, in relation to the protests in the City of London on 1<sup>st</sup> April, a combination of public video footage and events on the day, including the death of Ian Tomlinson, has brought both individual and collective police action under enormous public scrutiny. Many officers worked very hard. What the review identifies is that the world is changing and the police need to think about changing their approach to policing protest.”

The exercise of police discretion in public order policing has become more complex and testing. This requires regard to the law, to the expectations of protesters and those affected by protest, and to improved communication between the police, protesters and the public. Discharging the obligation to facilitate peaceful protest requires more than an acknowledgement of these challenges.

The key issue is the starting point for policing protest. The starting point should not be defining protest as lawful or unlawful. Instead, the presumption should be in favour of facilitating peaceful protest, unless levels of disruption require the police to place legitimate restrictions upon them. This impacts directly on planning, communications, and the implementation of police operations, as well as the use of tactics, and police training and guidance.

**The report makes a number of immediate recommendations, including that police:**

- **Facilitate peaceful protest.**
- **Improve dialogue with protest groups where possible.**
- **Improve communication with the public.**
- **Moderate impact of containment when used.**
- **Improve training to equip officers to deal with the full spectrum of protest activity.**
- **Wear clear identification at all times.**

and that:

- **National guidance on the policing of protest needs overhauling by ACPO.**

The Chief Inspector concluded that,

“We live in an age where public consent of policing cannot be assumed, and policing, including public order policing, should be designed to win the consent of the public. Future events like the Olympics 2012 make change all the more critical. This interim report is intended to assist the police service to achieve this change.”

**ENDS**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. The report is available on the HMIC website: <http://inspectrates.justice.gov.uk/hmic/>.
2. The report, part of the ongoing HMIC review of the policing of public protest, set out to consider:
  - the policing of public protests held during the G20 summit on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 2009
  - public perceptions, the legal framework and police professional practice
  - the sequence of events on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009
  - the tactics employed during the police operation relating to the G20 protests
3. Denis O'Connor was appointed Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary (HMCIC) in May 2009. He took over the role from Sir Ronnie Flanagan.
4. HMIC is an independent inspectorate. It is a fierce advocate for the public interest and rigorously examines the effectiveness of police forces and authorities to tackle crime and terrorism, improve criminal justice and raise confidence.
5. HMIC inspects and regulates all 43 police forces in England and Wales together with other major policing bodies such as the Serious Organised Crime Agency, the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the British Transport Police.
7. Further information on the role of HMIC can be found at [www.inspectrates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic](http://www.inspectrates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic).
8. The HMIC press office can be contacted on 0207 035 3852.