

## PRESS RELEASE

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### GOVERNMENT MUST HONOUR PROMISE TO ALLOW POLICE SHOOTING INQUEST TO PROCEED

On Monday 24 November the Counter Terrorism Bill returns to the House of Lords to once more discuss amending the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) to allow the inquest into the police shooting of Azelle Rodney to proceed. INQUEST urges the government to honour its promise of November 2007 to Azelle's bereaved family that action would be taken and accept an amendment to RIPA to allow intercept material to be used at inquests in narrowly defined circumstances.

Last week the Lords successfully introduced an amendment which would allow the use of intercept material at inquests on the proviso that a High Court judge makes the decision and on the basis that the evidence is central to ascertaining how a person came to die. This would have brought the treatment of intercept material at inquests broadly in line with the way it is treated in criminal proceedings.

The government rejected the proposals on Wednesday 19 November, despite promising Azelle's family as far back as November 2007 that they would find a solution to allow the inquest into his death to proceed. With the Bill returning to the Lords next week, INQUEST urges the government to reconsider its position.

Helen Shaw, Co-Director of INQUEST, said:

*"Police shootings raise important issues of state power and accountability and should be subject to particularly close public scrutiny in a free and democratic society. The need for a prompt inquest into the death of Azelle Rodney is important not only for his family but also for the wider public interest. Azelle's family have been left in the invidious position of not knowing when or if at all they can have an inquest into their son's death a result of a legal lacuna which could easily be resolved. We urge the government to support moves to ensure that RIPA is amended so that this inquest can take place"*

continues...

Daniel Machover, solicitor for Azelle's mother, Susan Alexander, said:

*"Peers and MPs must champion Susan Alexander's case. It is the very least she deserves. The government claims that a jury and Susan cannot be trusted to see intercept material, because it will put future intercept operations at risk, but this is wrong and scaremongering as juries can be vetted and they and Susan can sign agreements that prevent any risk of that kind – if parliamentarians understand that and vote on the proposed change to RIPA according to their conscience then they can ensure the government's promise to Susan is kept."*

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**Notes to editors:**

1) INQUEST's briefing for the Lords on the need for RIPA to be amended and its implications can be found [here](#).

2) Azelle Rodney in died in April 2005 during a police operation in north London in which he was shot seven times. In 2007 the family was told by the coroner that the full inquest could not be held because large portions of the police officers' statements had been crossed out under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA), which covers information obtained from covert surveillance devices such as telephone taps or bugs. The inquest has been put on hold until the issue is resolved.

3) INQUEST is the only non-governmental organisation in England and Wales that works directly with the families of those who die in custody. It provides an independent free legal and advice service to bereaved people on inquest procedures and their rights in the coroner's courts and conducts policy work on the issues arising.