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London Vigilante Targets Pickpockets on TikTok

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A Brazilian delivery rider has become a social media sensation in London after taking it upon himself to expose pickpockets operating in the capital's busiest tourist areas.

Diego Galdino, 32, originally from a family of police officers in Brazil, patrols central London on his food delivery rounds, filming suspected pickpockets in action. Posting under the

handle “pickpocketlondon,” his videos have attracted millions of views on TikTok and Instagram, sparking widespread debate about the rise of online vigilantes.

One clip uploaded in late July drew nearly 27 million views on TikTok, while another on Instagram showing a suspect spitting at him garnered more than 12 million views. Galdino claims his life has been transformed by the attention, with strangers recognising him on the street and news outlets requesting interviews.

Armed with a camera, Galdino positions himself in areas such as Westminster and Buckingham Palace, warning passers-by with his trademark shout of “pickpockets!” to deter thieves. He says a network of around 20 fellow delivery riders helps by sending alerts via WhatsApp when suspicious individuals are spotted nearby.

According to Galdino, pickpockets often work in pairs, disguise themselves as tourists, and target visitors unfamiliar with London’s risks. “These people get up in the morning to steal,” he said. “They don’t pay tax, they don’t contribute to society.”

The vigilante says he has been threatened and even assaulted while filming, but insists adrenaline and a sense of injustice keep him motivated.

On the streets, some Londoners have praised his efforts. “Keep doing what you’re doing!” said Tom, 37, after spotting him on patrol. Tourists have also welcomed his warnings.

Yet criminologists warn that untrained individuals confronting criminals risk inflaming dangerous situations. “We’ve got a kind of performative form of crime vigilantism for clicks,” said criminologist Jennifer Fleetwood. She argued that while Galdino may be well-intentioned, “this is not an effective form of crime control.”

The Metropolitan Police recently increased patrols in central London under Mayor Sadiq Khan, reporting a 15.6 percent reduction in thefts from the person in the first six weeks of their operation, from April 6. However, force statistics recorded more than 32,000 cases of “theft from the person” in central Westminster in the year to July, a rise on the previous 12-month period.

While social media clips may exaggerate the perception of crime in London, the capital remains a hotspot for pickpocketing due to its popularity with international visitors. Authorities continue to urge caution, advising tourists to remain alert and keep belongings secure.

