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Tensions Persist One Year After Rotherham Riot Near Migrant Hotel

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One year after violent unrest outside a hotel housing asylum seekers in Rotherham, local residents say tensions remain high, with little confidence that similar events won't

reoccur. The incident in August 2023 saw masked rioters descend on the Holiday Inn Express in north Rotherham, igniting renewed debate over immigration policy and community cohesion in the UK.

Witnesses Paris and Josh, who live just 200 metres from the hotel, described the chaos and fear that unfolded. “It looked like a modern-day lynching,” said Paris, recalling the masked crowd, many carrying alcohol, who tried to storm the premises. The couple moved their car to avoid damage and stayed indoors for several hours as the violence played out.

The riot was one of the most serious disturbances during a week of unrest across various towns, following a fatal knife attack in Southport that claimed the lives of three schoolgirls. The episode underscored long-standing public unease over the government’s handling of immigration and the widespread use of hotels to accommodate asylum seekers awaiting decisions.

A year later, the Holiday Inn Express is back in regular operation, but community concerns endure. “I still see in groups all this hate being spilled,” said Josh. Paris added, “I think it probably could happen again. That’s the faith I have in the country, really.”

South Yorkshire Mayor Oliver Coppard, who oversees policing, warned that the events could have ended far worse. “Had they been more effective at doing some of the things they were trying to do, we would have seen people dying on the day,” he told Sky News. He linked the violence to poverty and social discontent, urging better integration strategies and improvements in asylum processing.

Courts have handed down prison sentences to some rioters, though questions remain over whether the punishments are adequate. Protests have continued at other asylum accommodation sites, indicating widespread dissatisfaction.

In the town centre, a 23-year-old scaffolder named Josh voiced frustration at the perceived lack of resolution. “I don’t think it has been solved,” he said, suggesting it makes people “want to riot again.” While he supports legal migration, he called it “unfair”

that those arriving illegally, often by small boats, receive hotel housing.

Gabriel, a 38-year-old born in Rotherham, said the riot changed how minorities are viewed locally. “They are putting every minority in the same box, which is wrong,” he said. “That tension alone is worse than the actual incident.”

Another resident, who declined to be named, said trust in public institutions has eroded. “The backlash is going to happen with the government against the people – the people against the government,” she said. “The way I see it, we all have to live together.”

The continued unease in Rotherham reflects a broader failure to resolve issues surrounding the UK’s asylum system. As communities struggle with the fallout, calls grow for a more transparent and community-responsive immigration strategy.