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Police Continue Hunt for Southport Riot Suspects One Year On

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Police forces across the United Kingdom are still searching for around 40 individuals believed to have been involved in the Southport-related riots, nearly a year after widespread unrest erupted following the high-profile murder case involving Axel Rudakubana. Authorities are set to launch a public website to aid identification efforts, featuring images and details of those still wanted in connection with serious offences committed during the disturbances.

The riots, which affected multiple regions including Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cleveland, Northumbria, and Avon and Somerset, followed the murder of two individuals in Southport. Misleading information circulating on social media at the time stoked tensions, resulting in violent demonstrations and targeted attacks on community facilities, including hotels.

According to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which is responsible for prosecuting criminal cases investigated by police in England and Wales, 821 individuals out of 859 charged have been convicted as of 31 March 2025. Despite this high rate of successful prosecutions, authorities remain concerned about the small number of suspects still unaccounted for.

In recent weeks, renewed protests have been reported outside a hotel in Epping, Essex, where asylum seekers are temporarily housed. This follows allegations involving an individual charged with inappropriate behaviour toward a minor. Similar demonstrations have occurred in Norfolk and London, but law enforcement officials say these have not escalated into widespread unrest.

Assistant Chief Constable Ian Drummond-Smith, who is overseeing the national investigation into the riots, emphasised the importance of distinguishing between lawful protest and criminal activity. “We have a duty to facilitate protest,” he said. “But what we saw last year – and in some isolated incidents this year crossed the line into serious disorder.”

Drummond-Smith highlighted the swift deployment of police resources as a key factor in containing the recent disturbances. “Our ability to respond rapidly has been crucial. It’s allowed us to prevent the spread of violence across wider areas,” he stated.

Advancements in surveillance technology have also played a vital role in the investigation. Police have made extensive use of closed-circuit television (CCTV) and body-worn camera footage to identify suspects and secure convictions. “We’ve brought a significant number of offenders before the courts thanks to video evidence,” Drummond-Smith added.

A renewed national appeal is now underway to locate individuals responsible for what police have described as “significant” public order offences, including assault and destruction of property. Images of suspects, some of whom are believed to have travelled from outside the affected areas, will be circulated through a dedicated website and shared across local and national media channels.

“One year on, there are still people we haven’t identified despite having clear images,” said Drummond-Smith. “We’re asking members of the public to look at these images. If you recognise anyone, please contact us so we can hold them accountable.”

This effort reflects a broader strategy by police forces to improve rapid mobilisation and inter-agency coordination in response to public order threats. “We’ve strengthened our ability to move officers and resources across the country efficiently,” said Drummond-Smith. “It’s a capability we’ve been developing since last summer’s events.”

While political figures at the time, such as Sir Keir Starmer, characterised the unrest as “far-Right thuggery”, police leadership is maintaining a focus on evidence-based investigation and public cooperation to ensure justice is delivered and further disorder is prevented.

The appeal remains open, and authorities are urging anyone with relevant information to come forward.