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For peace & socialism

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CAMERON'S NEXT BIG SCANDAL

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Border Agency staff in the spotlight a year after man dies during deportation

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by Paddy McGuffin
Home Affairs Reporter

THE family of an Angolan national who died during an attempted deportation by G4S security guards a year ago will stage a vigil today outside the Crown Prosecution Service offices in London.

Jimmy Mubenga died on October 12 2010 after he was allegedly restrained by three G4S guards during an attempt to deport him to Angola on a BA flight from Heathrow.

Witnesses have said Mr Mubenga complained repeatedly that he could not breathe shortly before he collapsed.

The three guards were arrested on suspicion of murder and were recently re-bailed by police until December.

One year on, his family are still waiting for police to finish their investigations and for the CPS to consider bringing charges against the three.

It is not the first time that allegations of excessive restraint and force have been levelled at G4S and UK Border Agency (UKBA) staff during deportations.

In its 2008 report Outsourcing Abuse, deportation campaign group Medical Justice documented nearly 300 injuries sustained by people during the deportation process.

Forty-two deportees complained of having their breathing restricted and some suffered neck injuries from having their head pushed forward between their knees.

G4S no longer holds the contract for deportation escorts, which has passed to Reliance Security Task Management.

But allegations about the use of excessive force have continued.

Last week, six escorts allegedly assaulted a Nigerian woman during an attempted deportation to Italy in front of her three young children.

Medical Justice spokeswoman Emma Ginn said: "Even after Jimmy's death, the UKBA has failed to demonstrate any concrete changes that will prevent further abuse and death.

"Our volunteer doctors continue to document injuries sustained during forced removals. The only decent course of action is to at least suspend the use of force until all investigations into Jimmy's death have concluded and urgently needed lessons are learned."

Last month HM Inspector of Prisons inspectors reported that escorts "sometimes spoke to detainees in patronising terms" and expressed serious concern "at the highly offensive and sometime racist language they heard staff use between themselves."

They further found that "tensions were sometimes raised when force or restraint was used unnecessarily and some staff demonstrated an unacceptably unprofessional attitude."

Inquest co-director Helen Shaw said Mr Mubenga's death "followed a pattern of complaints about the use of excessive force against people being deported.

"The lengthy and ongoing investigation into his death must not mean that there is a lack of public scrutiny into the wider concerns about abuses and dangerous methods of restraint used on people being forcibly removed from the country that result in the risk of further deaths and serious injuries," she said.

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