

## Statement on HMIC Report into Undercover Policing 14 Oct 2014

Eight women bringing legal action against the Metropolitan police arising from deception by undercover officers issued a statement in response to today's HMIC Report, as follows:

"We believe this report is the latest in a long line of official attempts to whitewash the human rights abuses of undercover police officers deceiving women into intimate sexual relationships.

The report is full of contradictions on this issue. Despite uncovering a long list of failings by the police and regulating bodies, recognising the clear risks posed by undercover policing to human rights, and "*acknowledging the clear public concern about such relationships*", HMIC says these abuses are "*outside the scope of this inspection*". Nevertheless, they assert that they are re-assured that sufficient safeguards are in place to prevent such relationships happening.

**There is nothing in the HMIC report to indicate that effective measures have been or will be put in place to prevent human rights abuses carried out by undercover officers entering into intimate sexual relationships whilst in their undercover persona.**

Despite assertions made in the HMIC report and the accompanying press release that other investigations are covering this issue, there has never been a specific investigation into these abusive intimate sexual relationships covering the entire period they took place (at least from 1984 - 2010). Without such an investigation it is too easy for the police to claim such abuses are in the past, the fault of a rogue unit (the SDS) or of a rogue officer (Mark Kennedy of NPOIU) and therefore no action need be taken.

Yet these human rights abuses have consistently occurred, both during the era of the Special Demonstration Squad and the National Public Order Intelligence Unit (NPOIU), which was supposedly acting in compliance with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). The Act and its implementation are clearly inadequate as a mechanism to protect human rights.

Furthermore, this year the Home Office began consultation into the Codes of Practice for Covert Human Intelligence Sources, which covers undercover police officers. We submitted comprehensive evidence detailing the serious harm done by undercover policing to our lives, and proposed that the codes of practice should contain the explicit instruction "**Officers are expressly forbidden from entering into intimate or sexual relationships whilst in their undercover persona.**" The new draft to be laid before parliament, however, contains no reference to intimate or sexual relationships, suggesting that there is no intention to ban the practice, despite the rhetoric to the contrary.

HMIC's position is that there is no need for specific legal controls around sexual relationships. In this report they talk of undercover officers as "*those who have the power to undertake some of the most sensitive and most intrusive forms of policing in a democracy; those who have the power to engage in any conduct ... those who have the power to intrude into the personal and private lives of individuals who are caught in the midst of an investigation but who have themselves not committed any offence...*" Yet it is implied that these officers can be trusted to police themselves around this issue based on a general understanding of the ethical issues involved. Our experiences of more than two and a half decades of human rights violations clearly demonstrate that undercover police officers and their commanders *cannot* be trusted.

We welcome the fact that the report acknowledges that NCND (neither confirm nor deny) by the police in relation to undercover policing has no legislative foundation. It also recognises the blanket adoption of NCND potentially undermines public policy by preventing members of the public from making effective complaints about officers and being informed of the progress of those complaints. This so-called 'policy' has prevented us and other victims of malpractice by undercover police from cooperating with any investigation.

Unlike HMIC, we are not 'reassured' that sufficient safeguards are in place to prevent police spies forming inappropriate relationships. We will continue our fight against the institutionalised sexism and the abuses of undercover policing."

For further information see <http://policespiesoutoflives.org.uk/>

*Police Spies Out of Lives* is a support group for the legal action by eight women deceived into long-term intimate relationships with undercover police officers who were infiltrating environmental and social justice campaign groups.