



# RIOTS IN LONDON

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The chaos all started from a police shooting which occurred in Tottenham on Thursday, August 4, 2011. Twenty-nine-year-old Mark Duggan was part of a pre-planned police operation under Trident, a unit which investigates gun crime in the African and Caribbean communities of England. The police were trying to stop Duggan's car to arrest him when gun-fire began. Duggan was shot and killed by the police.

A bullet found lodged in one of the officer's radios implied Duggan was in fact part of the shooting, but it was later forensically confirmed that Duggan had not opened fire against the officers before being shot to death.

On August 6, two days after the shooting, three hundred people gathered outside Tottenham police station wanting "justice" for Mark Duggan and his family. This started out as a peaceful demonstration, but after a few bottles were thrown at police cars, setting one ablaze, the violence officially commenced.

The worst violence raged parts of London including Hackney, Brixton, Chingford, Peckham, Enfield, Croydon, and East Ham. One hundred youths used social media to gather outside the Enfield police station on

August 7, looting shops and rioting in the streets. Bricks were thrown at the police officers trying to calm the fights. The riots continued on the eighth, with shops and cars being set on fire.

After the initial attacks, "copycat violence" trailed in Bristol, Manchester, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Nottingham, Salford, and Liverpool over the next five days.

There had been six-hundred eighty-five arrests made by August 10. Prime Minister David Cameron commented, "We will not allow a culture of fear to exist on our streets." He also warned that there would be more arrests to come. On the eleventh, Cameron stated the rioting was "criminality, pure and simple."

The last official day of the riots took place on August 12, 2011. With large numbers of police officers still occupying the streets, there was finally a peaceful night in London.

According to BBC News, as of August 15, a total of nearly 3,100 people had been arrested. Of these, more than 1,000 have been charged and appeared in court.

## A VIEW FROM AN AMERICAN'S EYE

In order to get a different perspective than one found on BBC News, Greta Mugge, a former Iowa State student who studied abroad at Middlesex University in London in 2010, provided some insight on how the common laws in England were different than what she was accustomed to in the U.S.

"Their strangest law, I felt, was that everyone had to have a 'TV license' in order to own a TV, which funded television, radio and internet services provided by BBC. The cost was almost 150 pounds a year," Greta said in reference to dissimilarities in laws. "This meant that for a live event, like the Olympics or the Super Bowl, students were usually crowded around the dorm TV downstairs or in a lucky rich student's dorm. For regular TV however, the students relied on their laptops, scouring the internet for the latest streaming site. Every single person in that dorm was illegally downloading from their computers."

Internet streaming is obviously a popular tool used by citizens of the U.S., but imagine having to pay \$236 a year simply to own a television, on top of however much was spent to purchase the TV in the first place. It's no wonder numerous photos taken during the August rioting in London showed youths rushing out of the broken-glass doors of looted shops carrying brand new televisions; at least that much would be free.

"The government was never really mentioned by the students so I can't give you a lot on their feelings of it," Greta said when asked about government involvement she noticed during her stay or in regards to the riots, "but I do know Wood Green, where my dorm was located, was one of the places that rioting occurred."

"When I first arrived in London, even the Tube security guard told us we shouldn't stay there since it was considered dangerous, but as time passed that apparently just meant 'ethnic,'" Greta continued. "I never walked in that neighborhood and felt threatened and I even felt comfortable running to the park at night. There were a lot of large families of African or Indian descent and I think that's where the discrimination stemmed from."

Lastly, Greta discussed her thoughts about the riots, thankfully having studied in London before the madness occurred. "From what I read with the riots, many felt that Wood Green, as well as Tottenham, was a forgotten or unimportant area and that the forces let the riots go on too long because they didn't care if the area was destroyed and that it might give reason to arrest citizens later on charges of looting."

Seeing as how there were 215 arrests made in Tottenham over the first two nights of rioting alone, it's safe to say this may very well have been the case.

## AN UNWRITTEN CONSTITUTION

The constitution of a country is a set of rules regulating the powers of its government and the rights and duties of its citizens.

The United Kingdom is one of three countries which do not have a single written constitution, the other two being Israel and New Zealand. Although the country does have "rules and regulations," the lack of "constitutional laws" in the country might have been one of the largest impacts to the elongation of the London rioting.

Laws found in the U.S. Constitution allow enough government involvement that had the rioting happened in America, the situation may have been resolved more quickly due to military interference. This can be backed up in Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution stating that "Congress shall have power... to provide for calling forth the Militia to execute laws of the Union, suppress

Insurrections, and repel  
Invasions."

American citizens have the freedoms listed in the First Amendment for a reason, that being the government should not be able to control every aspect the country, but act when needed. The London riots are clear examples of how an organized set of laws, although changed over time, could have been utilized to provide a way of this chaotic situation.

