



City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London SE1 2AA

9th June 2020

To Whom it May Concern,

RE: Plans of far-right football groups to disrupt Black Lives Matter protests

The horrific death of George Floyd at the hands of US law enforcement has sent shockwaves of anger and grief throughout the world.

Sadly, the footballing community is no stranger to the scourge of racism, and throughout its history, it has grappled with it in both its overt and systemic forms. Despite some of the progress that has made been over the decades, the struggle against discrimination in the game continues. Right now, I am sure you will agree that the need for football clubs to stand in solidarity with BAME communities is as vital as it has ever been.

It has been incredibly positive to see so many professional footballers lead by example and use their social media platforms to amplify the growing chorus of voices around the world calling for racial equality and justice. The impact of the vital work that your club has been recently undertaking to stamp out racism from the game and the stands on matchdays has also been encouraging.

However, with the football season suspended and stadium gates closed, we must not allow the ugly scourge of racism to creep back into the culture of the beautiful game through the backdoor.

On this note, I would like to draw your attention to concerning reports from Hope Not Hate, which reveal the plans of far-right football hooligan groups to travel to London this weekend to confront Black Lives Matter protestors.^[1] The plans have now also been backed and promoted by convicted fraudster, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon.

The protests and demonstrations for racial justice that we have seen in our capital have so far been largely peaceful, and have constructively and effectively engaged Londoners from all

^[1] <https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/2020/06/08/football-hooligans-and-far-right-plan-london-demonstration/>



backgrounds. However, as you will have seen, there have been pockets of violence stirred up by a small number of individuals.

Based on precedent, it is very likely that the presence of far-right counter-protestors pushing their regressive and hateful agenda, will stir up tensions and yet more violence. They have nothing constructive to add to the dialogue, but needless provocation.

I now urge your club to use its widespread influence and publicly denounce the plans of the Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA) and other far-right groups to disrupt and attempt to sabotage the Black Lives Matter protests.

Please note that I have written to all professional football clubs based in London with this request.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Unmesh Desai". Below the signature is a short horizontal line.

Unmesh Desai AM
Labour's London Assembly Policing and Crime Spokesperson
London Assembly Member for City & East London