UK welcomes ‘de-escalation’ of far-right violence after atrocity

AFP- The UK government welcomed Monday the “de-escalation” of far-right inspired disorder and rioting following a knife attack that killed three children, but insisted officials remain on “high alert”.
Prime Minister Keir Starmer’s spokeswoman was speaking a day after hundreds of people gathered for the funeral of nine-year-old victim Alice da Silva Aguiar.

Mourners wore white, a tradition for some in Portugal, where Alice’s parents hail from.

“She was taken from us in an unimaginable act of violence that has left our hearts broken beyond repair,” they said in a statement released through police, adding she was “full of joy, light, and love”.

Two other girls — Bebe King, six, and Elsie Dot Stancombe, seven — also died in the attack. Ten others were injured including eight children.

The far-right violence in English towns and cities came after misinformation spread about the identity of the alleged perpetrator of the mass stabbing on July 29 at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport, northwestern England.

“We welcome that there has been a de-escalation this weekend. But we’re certainly not complacent and remain on high alert,” the prime minister’s spokeswoman said.

The stabbings sparked a riot in Southport the following evening, on July 30, and violence in more than a dozen English towns and cities as well as in Northern Ireland over the ensuing week.

Starmer’s spokeswoman added that authorities had acted decisively to quell the unrest.

“We also recognise that the job is not done until people feel safe in their communities, but thanks to the work of our police officers, prosecutor and judiciary, we have seen a swift response from the justice system,” she said.

“Within a matter of days, we’ve seen criminals involved arrested, charged, sentenced and behind bars.”

– Far-right agitators –

As of Monday, 975 people had been arrested and over 500 charged for involvement in the disorder, according to the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC).

Officials pointed the finger at far-right agitators and opportunist “thugs” accused of using the Southport tragedy to further their anti-immigration, anti-Muslim agenda.

Misinformation spread online in the immediate aftermath of the stabbing spree, claiming that the perpetrator was a Muslim immigrant.

Two 12-year-old boys on Monday pleaded guilty to violent disorder, becoming the youngest to admit taking part in the riots.

One was accused of throwing a missile at a police van in Manchester, in the northwest.

District Judge Joanne Hirst said the boy – who cannot be named due to his age – had been more involved in the violence than any other accused person she had seen “coming through these courts, adult or child”.

British-born Axel Rudakubana has been charged with murder and attempted murder over the mass stabbing.

His parents originally come from Rwanda, which is overwhelmingly Christian.

A motive for the atrocity has not been disclosed, but police have said it is not being treated as terrorism-related.

Writing in The Telegraph on Monday, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper also called out the “shameful behaviour we have seen from some senior politicians and pundits who sought to undermine the legitimacy and authority of the police”.

Hard-right Reform UK leader Nigel Farage and X CEO Elon Musk have been among the big names questioning the policing of the riots.

The American tech billionaire has posted a string of X posts criticising the sentences handed down to rioters and accusing the UK government of censoring free speech after two people were jailed for stirring up racial hate online.

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