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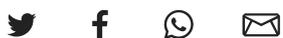


London's teenage murder rate soars to highest in more than a decade

As capital moves slowly out of lockdown, 17 youngsters have already been murdered this year, which is set to be bloodiest since 2008

By Martin Evans, CRIME CORRESPONDENT

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The teenage murder rate in London is on course to be the worst since 2008, police have warned, following a surge in [post-lockdown stabbings](#).

A total of 17 youngsters have already been murdered in the capital since the beginning of the year, and Scotland Yard fears the situation will get worse during the summer months.

After several years of worrying rises, [the murder rate among teenagers fell significantly](#) as a result of the pandemic and associated lockdowns.

While 26 teenage homicides were recorded in 2019, that number almost halved to 15 last year.

However, with that figure already surpassed by the middle of June, senior Metropolitan Police officers are warning that 2021 could be the [bloodiest year since 2008](#), when 28 teenagers lost their lives as a result of violent crime.

The vast majority of those to die were stabbed to death and police and anti-violence campaigners are calling for urgent community action to stem the [epidemic of knife crime sweeping London](#).

One tactic being rolled out by the Met is the use of high-speed motorcycle units to tackle offenders who use [e-scooters](#) to carry out robberies.



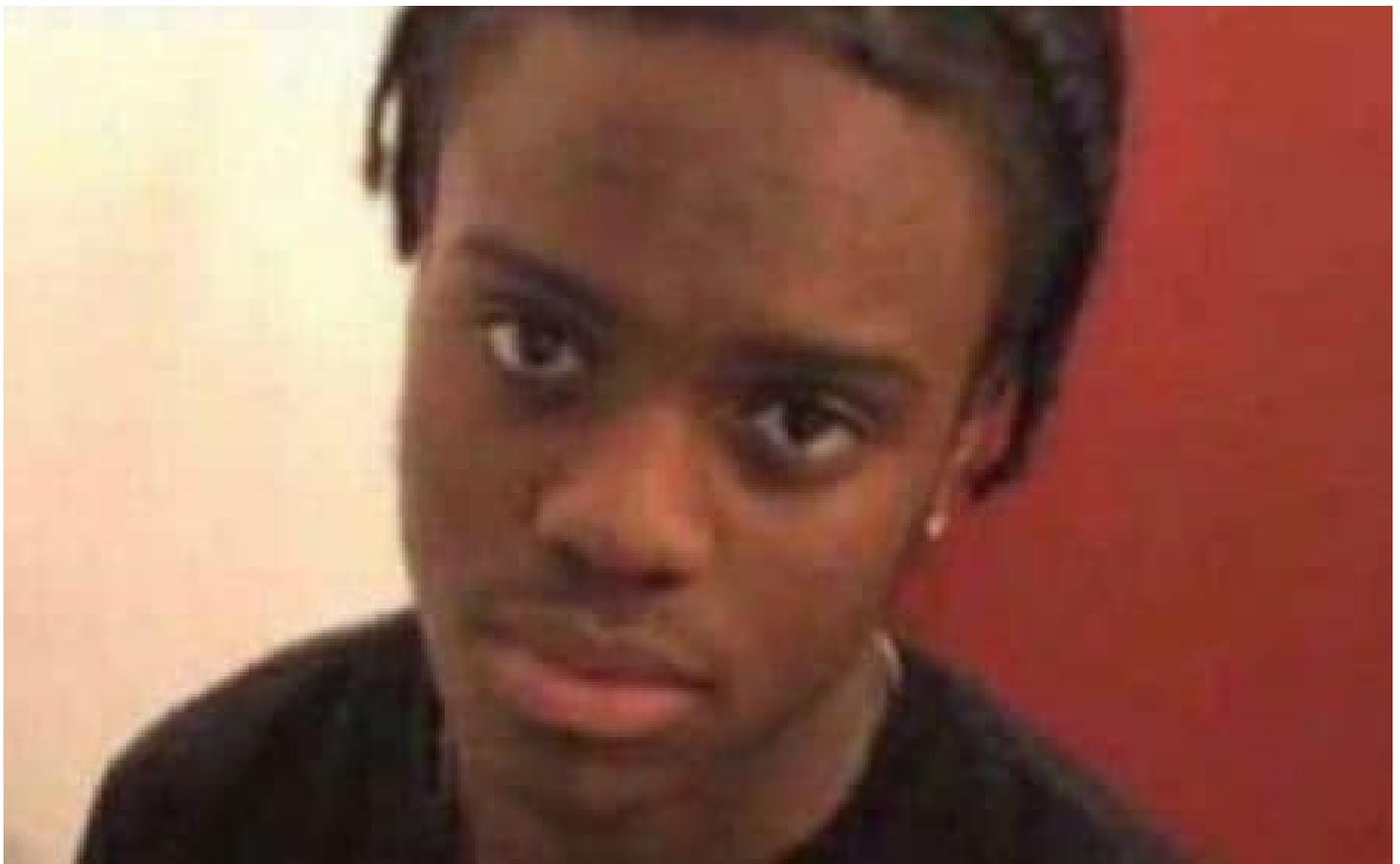
Fares Maatou was just 14 years old when he was stabbed to death in east London in April. He had been riding an e-scooter when he became involved in a fight and was fatally stabbed in the neck | CREDIT: News Scans

The force is also dramatically increasing visible patrols in areas where gang violence is a problem.

Commander Alex Murray, who leads the Met's anti-violence strategy said: "Serious violence offences have declined by 22 percent over the past year, and overall the murder rate is down.

"However, we have seen an increase in the murder of teenagers, with 17 being murdered so far this year. If London continues to see this rate of violence we will be on track to see the worst year for young homicides since 2008.

"Every single murder is a tragedy, but they are not spread evenly either geographically or by age and ethnicity.



Junior Jah, 18, became the 12th teenager to die in London when he was stabbed to death in April close to his family home in Canning Town, east London. Tragically, he was killed just yards from where his older brother Ahmed Jah was murdered aged 21 in 2017 | CREDIT: News Scans

"Of these young victims, more than two thirds are black and 15 were killed with a knife. We are extremely concerned about this and are calling on every Londoner to play their part to prevent further needless killings."

Of the teenagers killed in London this year, the youngest to die was 14-year-old Fares Maatou, who was allegedly stabbed to death with a Samurai sword in Newham during a

row over an e-scooter.

Eighteen-year-old Junior Jah, who was killed in Canning Town in east London in April, was the second member of his family to be stabbed to death. His older brother Ahmed Jah was knifed to death, aged 21, in a nearby [off-licence](#) in 2017.



Jalan Woods-Bell, 15, died earlier this month after becoming involved in an altercation as he made his way to school in Hayes, west London | CREDIT: News Scans

However, despite the shocking number of young deaths being recorded Mr Murray said police were still being met with a “wall of silence” from some parts of the community when they tried to bring those responsible to justice.

He said: “Through lockdown there has been an incredible amount of work to take the wind out of the sails of people who drive violence.

“More than 400 guns have been recovered, thousands of knives and large quantities of drugs have been seized. A record £47 million in cash has been confiscated and high harm offenders have been taken off the streets.

“But detectives investigating serious violence often meet silence from people we know have information that could help prevent violence. We have seen it recently in the tragic [shooting of Sasha Johnson](#) that took place last month.”



A second teenager has now been charged with conspiracy to murder over the shooting of black rights activist Sasha Johnson, who remains in a critical condition in hospital after being shot in the head at a party in Peckham, south London | CREDIT: PA

“We understand that some people may not trust the police, so we are working hard to build those relationships and show that we are only motivated by preventing violence. It is our number one priority.”

The Met is also promoting the Hard Calls Saves Lives initiative which is urging people who suspect someone close to them is involved in knife crime, to inform the Crimestoppers charity anonymously.

Yvonne Lawson MBE, whose son Godwin, a talented footballer on the books of Oxford United, was murdered, warned that society was becoming desensitised to youth violence.

She said: "We may have had a brief respite from knife crime over the lockdown period but recent activity since easing restrictions has been distressing indeed.

"It has been 11 years since I sadly lost Godwin to knife crime as he tried to stop a fight between friends. Eleven years on, mothers are still losing their babies to knife crime in our capital. We should never get desensitised or complacent to youth violence.

"We need to all come together and fight this epidemic as we are fighting Covid-19. The police alone don't have the cure, we urgently all need to work together, report what you

know about violence and free young people from this terrible cycle."

Pastor Lorraine Jones, whose [son Dwayne was killed in 2014](#), added: "The police cannot solve this problem alone. The next child could be yours or someone you know. The wall of silence can only be broken by us."

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