

Parents of teen killed in police incident 'disappointed' by communications

The parents of Mika'il Rashid, a 17-year-old Aurora resident who was killed in a police shooting outside his home near Bayview Avenue and St. John's Sideroad on October 30, 2024, are calling for empathy more than a year after the incident.

Ontario's Special Investigations Unit (SIU), which investigates incidents involving an official where there has been death, serious injury, and the discharge of a firearm at a person, found the police involved were 'engaged in the discharge of their lawful duties throughout the series of events surrounding the gunfire.'

'Having been called to the scene of a reported break and enter in progress, the officers were duty-bound to attend to do what they reasonably could to enforce the law and ensure public safety,' the SIU concluded.

In a letter shared with media, Lalarukh and Jamil Rashid say 'deep confusion' was felt in the community following the incident, including erroneous reports in a television news broadcast that made 'unverified' claims about his history with police; a letter from the York Regional Police confirmed their son had no prior history with police.

'Our family's goal is not division, but understanding,' they said.

'Mika'il's friends ' young hearts who loved him deeply ' were heartbroken not only by his loss, but by the miscommunication that followed. They saw someone they admired and trusted portrayed in a way that did not reflect who he truly was. Even as we approach the one-year mark, that added pain remains ' felt in every tear they shed and every memory they hold close. We want our community to know the truth. York Regional Police have formally confirmed in writing that Mika'il had no criminal record and was never in trouble with the police. He was a kind, intelligent, and deeply loved boy with dreams who deserved to be remembered with honesty and compassion.

'We want to restore trust and faith in our systems, and to ensure that accountability and transparency guide how tragedies like this are spoken about in our Town. We are deeply grateful to those in our community, his school who have stood by us with compassion and courage through this painful year ' including members of Aurora Council, such as Councillors Ron Weese and John Gallo, and Phiona Durrant representing the Aurora Black Community Association, who reminded others to meet tragedy with empathy and humanity. Nothing but truth and facts ' that's all that those who love and miss a beautiful soul like Mika'il ask for. This letter is for our beloved son, and especially for his friends who still visit his gravesite ' holding on to his memory and searching for nothing but the truth about that night.'

The anniversary of the incident was also marked by the Aurora Black Community Association, with a virtual moment of silence for Rashid.

'As a mother, and as a member of this community for 19 years, I feel deeply the weight of this loss ' not just for one family, but for all of us,' said Aurora Black Community Association founder and president Phiona Durrant in a statement. 'It takes a village to raise our youth and today, the village we must be is one of care, trust and connection. We must know our neighbours. We must talk to our youth. We must keep watch ' not out of fear, but out of love. Being a village means showing up before tragedy strikes: walking alongside each other, hearing each other's stories, offering help where it is needed, learning about our diversity and unique cultures, and remembering that in losing one young person, our community loses a gift.

'We are grateful to Mikail's family for sharing an official letter from the York Regional Police, confirming that Mikhail had no criminal record ' a truth that challenges the stereotypes too often placed on our youth, especially when it comes to our young men. This truth further affirms Mikail's dignity and honour in memory. A young man who was full of potential, promise and light.

'To Mikail's family, know that ABC and the Aurora community sees you, and we grieve with you. To our youth, know that you are valued and loved! Look out for each other with care.'

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter