



British Coroner Rules That a Nine-year-old Girl Died from “Air Pollution”

In a largely politically based ruling, a British coroner has ruled that the tragic 2013 death of nine-year-old Ella Adoo Kissi-Debrah of South London was, at least in part, due to air pollution. The [Record of Inquest](#) was released on Thursday, and it is reportedly the first time a person death’s in Great Britain was attributed to air pollution.

Officially, Ella died from “asthma contributed to by exposure to excessive air pollution,” according to assistant coroner Phillip Barlow.

From the Record of Inquest:

Air pollution was a significant contributory factor to both the induction and exacerbations of her asthma. During the course of her illness between 2010 and 2013 she was exposed to levels of Nitrogen Dioxide and Particulate Matter in excess of World Health Organization Guidelines. The principle source of her exposure was traffic emissions. During this period there was a recognized failure to reduce the level of NO₂ to within limits set by the EU and domestic law which possibly contributed to her death.



London skyline (Photo credit: chrismhs/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

Ella and her family lived within thirty meters of London’s South Circular Road, which is well known for its traffic snarls and thick air pollution.

The last two years of Ella’s life were punctuated with at least 30 trips to the hospital for asthma attacks and no less than five occurrences of collapsed or partially collapsed lungs. Ella’s mother Rosamund Kissi-Debrah, a former teacher, claims she never knew the polluted air that her daughter was breathing in might be killing her. Had she known, she says she would have moved the family immediately.

“We were desperate for anything to help her. I would have moved straight away, I would have found another hospital for her and moved. I can’t say it enough. I was desperate, she was desperate.”

If that is true — that Ella’s mother knew *nothing* about how air pollution contributes to asthma — then



Written by [James Murphy](#) on December 18, 2020

Great Britain's National Health Service (NHS) has some serious explaining to do. If Ella had been hospitalized 30 times over two years and not one NHS physician or nurse mentioned that severe asthma could be alleviated by moving to a less polluted area, then the NHS is guilty of gross negligence. Gross negligence of such a scope that it's almost unbelievable.

According to Ella's mother, it was only after she began a charity in Ella's name to improve the lives of children with asthma that she began to connect the air pollution in the area to her daughter's death. "I got a call from someone who told me [that] in the two days around Ella's death there were big spikes in air pollution locally," Ella's mother said.

Ella's case was given some very high-profile attention. Human rights attorney Jocelyn Cockburn took up the case and Professor Stephen Holgate, an immunologist at the University of Southampton, was called upon to issue a report on Ella's death that linked her demise directly to London's air pollution.

The United Nations was even compelled to [weigh in](#) on the nine-year-old's death as the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) said it would be "the first time that air pollution has ever been explicitly linked to a named individual's death."

According to the World Health Organization, the same type of ambient air pollution that the London coroner says was responsible for Ella's death kills some 4.2 million people annually. Now, they have the face of a young girl and an official Record of Inquest to point to validate that unprovable statistic.

"We have estimates of numbers, or what we call 'deaths attributed to,' but there's never been one identified case, because it is very hard to directly link a death to air pollution," said Jonathon Griggs, a professor of pediatric respiratory and environmental medicine at Queen Mary University. "This is a groundbreaking decision, with pretty overwhelming evidence."

It's "groundbreaking" because it paves the way for individuals to sue companies, localities and potentially even countries for not properly addressing air pollution problems.

"Air pollution" is one of those nebulous terms that can be abused, depending upon who is using it. For example, carbon dioxide — a gas vital for life to continue on Earth — is often referred to as air pollution by climate alarmists; carbon pollution, they call it. We all believe that smog and dirty air is bad and can be especially bad for people like Ella with underlying conditions. Now with official sanction, in the UK at least, it can be pointed to as a "cause of death."



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