



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on August 10, 2011

Martial Law Considered as UK Riots Spread

Witnesses described the chaos in London as a “war zone” — whole city blocks burned to the ground, countless windows shattered, and more. Masked criminal gangs and growing bands of teenage thugs roaming the streets were still breaking into shops, attacking police, and setting buildings and vehicles ablaze on August 10.

And the mayhem shows no signs of abating so far. By Tuesday, rioting and looting had spread to Birmingham, Liverpool, Nottingham, Leeds, Bristol, and other major cities.



Over 1,200 people had been arrested nationwide by August 9 in what police called the worst disorder in living memory. Jails and holding cells in London were filled to capacity, with police having to take prisoners to nearby towns.

Dozens of police have been injured — some seriously — and at least one man was reportedly killed amid the turmoil. Rioters in Nottingham [allegedly](#) fire-bombed a police station. And authorities are also investigating what may have been attempted murder when a man drove into a police officer working to battle the chaos.

To restore order, the government called out 16,000 police officers just for London on Tuesday night — almost three times more than the number on duty Monday. Harsher measures have already been authorized, including the deployment of water cannons, non-lethal ammunition, and more.

Several [reports](#) in recent days indicated that the army was even being readied. And many top officials have repeatedly emphasized that “all options” — including troops — are on the table.

Numerous witnesses [claimed](#) in recent days that police were essentially allowing the chaos to unfold in certain areas, refusing to stop or arrest looters and arsonists as they rampaged through urban areas. Some even speculated that certain policemen may have been ordered not to interfere early on.

Authorities, however, have unequivocally blasted the wanton criminality. “The violence we have seen is simply inexcusable,” said police commander Christine Jones. “Ordinary people have had their lives turned upside down by this mindless thuggery.”

Prime Minister David Cameron, who cut short his vacation to convene an emergency Parliamentary session and meet with the so-called “cobra” council, has also forcefully condemned the anarchy. “You will feel the force of the law,” he promised the rioters. “If you are old enough to commit these crimes, you are old enough to face the punishment.”

But since the government has so far been unable to contain the destruction, some citizens have announced that they would take matters into their own hands. “We’re going to stop the riots — police obviously can’t handle it,” English Defense League leader Stephen Lennon [told](#) the Associated Press.

Despite police warnings against “vigilantism,” a group of Sikhs reportedly stood guard outside of their



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temple with hockey sticks as well. "The feeling was that [police] were spread so thin that there needs to be a community presence," Satjinder Singh of the group UK Sikhs [told](#) BBC. "And it is not vigilantism but it is effectively just protection of property."

Volunteer clean-up crews have also formed in some areas. But several citizens at least have reportedly been injured trying to protect homes and businesses from the marauding hordes.

The unrest began on August 6 in London after several hundred demonstrators gathered to protest the fatal police shooting of a 29-year-old father of four late last week. The controversial killing of Mark Duggan, variously [described](#) as a "gangster" and a "family man," triggered an official inquiry to determine the facts surrounding his death. But according to observers, it was also the catalyst that produced the first riots.

The protests quickly morphed into a senseless, violent rampage, however. By nightfall, the disorder was spreading and the criminals were starting to get completely out of control. And since then, problems have only intensified.

Meanwhile, political opportunists were rushing to pin responsibility for the unfolding crisis on everything from [multiculturalism](#) to [government spending cuts](#). "Mayors, local authorities always want more money and I don't blame them for that," Prime Minister Cameron explained after some police and politicians cited budget reductions as a contributing factor.

Media commentators were also quick to claim that poverty, unemployment, racism, inequality, and all sorts of other social ills were in fact the underlying cause. And at least a few of the criminal looters apparently latched onto to the idea.

Some of the rioters have actually attempted to portray the unrest as a sort of socialist class struggle. "This is the uprising of the working class," a 28-year-old man named Bryn Phillips was [quoted as saying](#) by the AP. "We're redistributing the wealth."

Countless criminals involved in the unrest made similar claims to reporters. And [communist propagandists](#) have jumped on the bandwagon, too.

But while some analysts have tried to frame the mayhem as a sort of "uprising" against the "establishment," the reality is that most of the victims have been local residents and small-business owners. More than a few charities were even torched by arsonists.

Still, all sorts of "experts" have blamed the rioting on "society" instead of individual criminals.

"Many of the people involved are likely to have been from low-income, high-unemployment estates, and many, if not most, do not have much of a legitimate future," Professor John Pitts, described as a "criminologist and youth culture expert," [told](#) the UK *Guardian*. "Unlike most people, some of those looting had no stake in conformity.... Much of this was opportunism but in the middle of it there is a social question to be asked about young people with nothing to lose."

For now, officials are stepping up the rhetoric — and the options available to law enforcement — in an effort to turn the tide. "We needed a fightback, and a fightback has begun," Cameron [explained](#) on August 10. "We will do whatever is necessary to restore order on our streets."

It is unclear how or when the chaos will finally be contained and eventually quashed. But authorities say they hope to have the situation under control soon. Then, according to analysts, the policy debate will truly begin.



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