

ACT OF TERROR

by
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EXT. CARTOON LONDON - DAY

A minimalist rendition of a sunny London street. The pristine red phone box and passing double decker bus suggest this is a London from a few years back.

A small ginger girl with freckles, GEMMA, stands next to a big burly POLICEMAN.

The British National Anthem plays throughout.

GEMMA (V.O.)
That's me.

An arrow appears above Gemma.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Or at least, that used to be me.

Gemma looks up to the policeman and smiles. Ting!

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I used to look up to the police.
Used to trust and respect them.

She shakes his hand and the camera pulls back to reveal two more police officers helping the passing public.

POLICEWOMAN 1 poses for a tourist photograph. POLICEWOMAN 2 talks to a man holding up a CND placard. POLICEMAN gives directions to a lost looking man.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now I see the police in a
different light...

The sun hides behind grey clouds, the national anthem warps, Gemma grows minutely and breasts pop out, the phone box is gutted, a bendy-bus drives past, and the friendly police suddenly scowl.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
A much darker light.

POLICEWOMAN 1 rips the camera from the tourists and smashes it. POLICEWOMAN 2 pepper sprays the protestor. POLICEMAN pushes the man asking directions and he falls to the pavement Ian Tomlinson style.

A London Underground train rushes across the screen and we follow it.

INT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The train pulls into a station and Gemma and her boyfriend FRED get off.

They walk hand in hand down the platform to the ticket gates where the three police officers surround them.

GEMMA (V.O.)

It all began when my boyfriend was stop and searched at a train station and I decided to film it on my phone.

While Fred is searched Gemma rummages in her pocket and pulls out her phone. We zoom in on the screen.

INT. PHONE SCREEN - CONTINUOUS

The real footage of Fred being searched plays. A plain clothed POLICE OFFICER approaching the camera.

POLICE OFFICER

Do you realise it's an offence under the Terrorism Act to film police officers?

CUT TO:

CCTV footage plays of Gemma being approached by police.

GEMMA (V.O.)

Suddenly police were all over me, plain-clothed and uniformed, shouting at me, grabbing at my phone. They pushed me into an alcove, handcuffed me, called me a terrorist, a drug dealer. I called for help but nobody stopped. They held me there, in that alcove, for 40 minutes. I couldn't stop shaking.

The phone we are watching is suddenly turned off.

EXT. WEST END THEATRE - NIGHT

Gemma puts her phone away as she walks into a theatre with Fred. The billboard above reads '*Much Ado About Terrorism*'.

GEMMA (V.O.)

So why did this happen?

INT. THEATRE HALL - CONTINUOUS

The couple sit among a full house of posh theatre-goers. The lights dim and the curtains draw.

A large scroll of paper headed '*The Terrorism Act 2000*' rolls down and hangs in the background. Three actors in various uniforms appear in front of it.

A 'POLICEMAN' warbles hysterically at a suited Blairite 'POLITICIAN'. Both then warble in unison at a 'LORD' in wig who grumpily warbles back. The Politician then turns a large organ grinder out of which comes a stream of paper.

GEMMA (V.O.)

Because of 9/11 in New York, and the terrorist attacks in London, parliament had been giving the police more and more new powers to fight terrorism.

The Politician takes the paper and sticks it to the end of the act behind. The Policeman grows larger and stronger.

A GIRL similar to Gemma appears and films the Policeman with her phone. He warbles again and the process repeats.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In 2009 a section was added saying it was an offence to photograph or film a police officer...

As soon as the new bit of paper is stuck to the Act, the Policeman leaps onto the Girl. A union jack flag unfurls, blocking the attack from view. The national anthem plays.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

...if the footage was *of a kind likely to be useful to a* terrorist.

And from behind the flag emerges the Policeman with a handcuffed 'OSAMA BIN LADEN'! The lights come on - the actors get a standing ovation. Gemma sits arms-folded among the raucous crowd.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But I wasn't a terrorist. And I wasn't going to let anyone treat me like that.

CUT TO:

Real library footage of BBC NEWS. The intro sequence plays.

NEWSREADER

A woman who claims she was handcuffed, detained, and threatened with arrest for filming officers on her mobile phone is taking the Met to the high court.

INT. SOLICITOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

We pull out from a TV set showing the news clip to foreground Gemma talking with her solicitor RAJU. A sign in the background says *Bhatt Murphy Solicitors*.

GEMMA (V.O.)

My lawyer agreed the police had abused their new powers. But rather than sue the individual officers, he said I should first fight for something much more substantial.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

Gemma and Raju walk down the street, dressed for court.

GEMMA (V.O.)

You see, what had happened to me was far from unique.

Dozens of people appear and march behind them in silent solidarity. They are men and women, all ages and colours.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

All over England, all kinds of people had been attacked, arrested, even imprisoned, just for filming or photographing the police. And none of them, none of them, were terrorists.

EXT. HIGH COURTS OF JUSTICE - DAY

Gemma, Raju, and their supporters stand on one side, the three police officers and their LEGAL TEAM on the other.

GEMMA (V.O.)

If we fought for a judicial review, a process where a judge checks the way the police interpret the law, we'd make sure nobody could ever be treated like that again.

A police LAWYER squares up to and snarls at Raju. The two have a Street Fighter II battle which results in the Lawyer falling to one knee, stars dancing round his head. Raju comes in for the knock out blow when - the record skips - everything stops.

The legal team surround the lawyer and carry him to safety, handing Raju a file as they hurry off.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 To avoid a judicial review, the
 police decided to reword and
 reissue the guidelines on the
 Terrorism Act given to officers.

Tense faces as Raju carefully opens the file and reads.

EXT. FILE - CONTINUOUS

We close in on the open file pages which become a stage
 where the actors from '*Much Ado About Terrorism*' reappear.

GEMMA (V.O.)
 When a law is passed, guidelines
 are often written to help the
 police apply the law in the real
 world.

The Politician hands the Policeman a book entitled '*A Law*'.
 He looks confused as he reads it. A police Lawyer hands him
 a thicker, more childish looking book called '*Guidelines*'.
 The Policeman smiles and nods as he reads - until the Girl
 appears and takes his photo. As he jumps at her, Raju's
 giant hand turns the file page.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 If a law is not being enforced as
 parliament intended, changing the
 guidelines can solve the problem.

On the new page, the cast stand before a JUDGE, bruised
 Girl on one side, Policeman and police Lawyer on the other.
 The Judge murmurs as he checks '*A Law*', then warbles
 angrily as he checks '*Guidelines*', hurling the book at the
 Lawyer who smiles and grovels and gets out a red pen.

Again Raju turns the page and we see the text of the
 Guidelines get crossed out and scribbled over with red ink.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Thanks to my case, the guidelines
 now clearly stated that the
 public could photograph officers
 during normal police activities,
 even protests.

EXT. HIGH COURTS OF JUSTICE - DAY

Raju smiles, Gemma smiles, the crowd smiles. Relief.

GEMMA (V.O.)
 We hadn't got rid of the stupid
 law, but at least the police
 would properly implement it now.

FIGHTER ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
Gemma wins!

Everyone claps and whoops. Close in on Gemma.

GEMMA (V.O.)
Now I could tackle the other part
of my case - bringing the police
officers who'd hurt me to justice

INT. IPCC OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Pull out to reveal Gemma and the three police officers sat
at desks scribbling out statements as if taking exams.

GEMMA (V.O.)
If you have issue with a police
officer, you have to go through
the Independent Police Complaints
Commission.

A COMMISSIONER (with IPCC shirt on) wanders between them
like a teacher checking for cheats.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I thought the commission would
read our statements, see how the
officers had abused the law and
mistreated me, and then
discipline them.

A tick appears above Gemma and the two female police
officers. But Policeman 1 has a red X appear above him.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But one statement didn't match
the others!

Gemma goes bright red and leaps from her desk - grabbing PC
WEAVER'S statement. She reads it with disbelief.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
On all the important points, the
most senior officer present
contradicted not just me, not
just my phone footage, but both
his colleagues!

The three police officers get up and exit through a door
held open by the smiling Commissioner who then follows.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And what did the IPCC do? They
did bugger all!

Gemma runs after them, smashing into the hastily closed
door. She brushes herself down and opens the door.

EXT. LONDON STREET - DAY

Gemma walks onto the street but there's no sign of the officers - only members of public doing criminal acts and then shrugging their shoulders when Gemma passes them.

GEMMA (V.O.)

They ignored the discrepancies,
agreed the officers had wrongly
implemented the law, but said
they couldn't be accused of
misconduct because they didn't
know they had wrongly implemented
the law!

A teenage BOY sprays a swastika on a wall and shrugs.

A WOMAN drops a cat in a wheelie bin and shrugs.

A MAN stuffs a grenade into another man's mouth and shrugs
(the other man's head explodes off-screen).

Gemma looks at us with disbelief.

INT. SOLICITOR'S OFFICE / IPCC OFFICE - DAY

The screen is divided between the two locations, Raju in one office, the Commissioner in the other.

Gemma enters Raju's office, takes a seat, and smiles nervously. Raju types furiously on his computer. The Commissioner types furiously on his computer. Gemma leaves.

Gemma enters Raju's office looking tired and stressed. Raju phones the Commissioner to protest. The Commissioner phones Raju to protest. Gemma leaves.

GEMMA (V.O.)

At times I felt like giving up.

Gemma enters Raju's office looking haggard and exhausted. Raju opens the window and blows a raspberry. The Commissioner opens his window and blows a raspberry. Gemma sighs, looks defeated, and points to the phone. Raju calls the Commissioner who then nods and exits.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But after a lot of excuses and
attempts to pass the blame onto
me, after 19 months of legal
costs and stress, they offered an
out of court settlement and I
took it.

The Commissioner walks into Raju's office and dumps a large sack of money on his desk, blowing a raspberry as he exits.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Still eh, at least I got those
guidelines cleared up.

EXT. LONDON STREET - AFTERNOON

Gemma walks past an incident of a MAN being arrested by
five police OFFICERS who hold him facedown on the ground.

GEMMA (V.O.)
Or at least, that's what I
thought until I saw something
walking home one night.

She takes out her mobile phone and films it.

INT. MOBILE PHONE SCREEN - CONTINUOUS

The real footage of the incident plays. An officer with his
knee in the man's back sees Gemma filming and points.

POLICE OFFICER
Oi, stop her filming!

EXT. LONDON STREET - CONTINUOUS

A visibly shaken Gemma puts her phone away.

GEMMA (V.O.)
I knew it was my right to film
but fear took over. I stopped.

Gemma walks along the street and clips of previous scenes
fade in and out like memories (the key ones being Raju's
fight with the police lawyer, the later crowd celebration).

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
All that work, all that struggle,
yet nothing changed. We obviously
can't rely on the police to learn
the laws they enforce, or the
IPCC to punish them for not
bothering.

Gemma passes a group of chanting protestors with an '*I'm a
photographer not a terrorist*' banner.

Then another group with a '*Stop Police Brutality*' banner.

GEMMA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
People are campaigning to get rid of this horrible law once and for all, but right now its up to all of us to know the law, understand the law, and be able to stand up for ourselves when the police get it wrong.

Gemma walks into a school.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gemma stands before a class of children besides a dummy dressed up in a police uniform.

GEMMA (V.O.)
So next time the police try to stop you photographing or filming them, tell them you are allowed.

CHILDREN
We are allowed to film you!

On a blackboard behind her the main points appear in chalk.

GEMMA (V.O.)
If they ask for your name, your personal details, or your possessions, tell them no.

CHILDREN
No!

GEMMA (V.O.)
And no matter how much they threaten you, tell them that according to section 58a of the terrorism act, police can only stop you filming them if they have reasonable suspicion that you are a terrorist or you are helping one.

CHILDREN
According to section 58a of the terrorism act, you can only stop me filming you if you have reasonable suspicion that I'm a terrorist or I'm helping one.

GEMMA (V.O.)
Good.

Gemma smiles (Ting!) and jaunty music plays over credits.

END