

"KARRINJARLA MUWAJARRI WE WANT A CEASEFIRE"

WALKER FAMILY & YUENDUMU ELDERS CONDEMN ROLFE VERDICT

BREAKING NEWS: Kumanjayi Walker's family and Senior Yuendumu Elders have condemned the verdict handed down by the jury in the murder trial of police officer Zachary Rolfe today. They say the outcome is the direct result of racism in the court system and have provided a list of demands for sweeping changes to NT policing including a call for increased Aboriginal community control.

Mr. Ned Jampijinpa Hargraves, long-term advocate for no guns in remote communities said:

"The court didn't take action so we need to take action on the ground in our communities to protect ourselves from racist police. We have waited for too long. We are calling on all yapa, yapa organisations and supporters to join us in demanding no more guns in remote communities. No more ex-military postings. Local police only, no external police units. Our Senior Elders and yapa police liaison officers must be decision-makers in policing matters, not ignored like they were the night Kumanjayi Walker was killed. Don't be afraid, stand up and tell them what you need."

The Walker family and Elders say these changes will move toward stopping police shootings of First Nations people. Valerie Napaljarri Martin, deputy-chair of the Parumpurru Justice Committee elected at Yuendumu to instruct the Kumanjayi Walker matter said:

"The biggest problem we have in our community is racism in the police. Racism kills. Racism killed Kumanjayi Walker. Now look at what happened during the trial? A young fella, the same age as Kumanjayi, was shot at six times in Palmerston by police! He is fighting for his life. The police have no respect at all".

Ms. Martin continued,

"There is no justice in the kardiya system. We are feeling so empty that our beloved young fella has been taken away from us. Nothing can bring him back. We have been devastated by this injustice and the court has not fulfilled its responsibility to hold Rolfe accountable for what he has done. The court system has not recognised our needs as Warlpiri people."

Spokesperson for the Walker family, Japangardi, said:

"We thought we were coming to a neutral ground where we could have a multicultural jury instead of just white people. But still there was no yapa on the jury. We felt left out. Are we not part of Australia? We want yapa on the jury so that they can tell other jury members how we see it. It's always kardiya people, seeing through their eyes but they need to see it through our eyes too. "

He continued,

"No police have ever been charged and convicted of any wrong doing in relation to any deaths in custody for yapa. There are over 500 deaths in custody since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody that still need justice. We will still fight. We will appeal this court decision. To other families fighting for justice, we say never back down. Keep fighting until justice prevails".

Mr. Hargraves reiterates,

"Karrinjarla muwajarri meaning we want a ceasefire. No more guns in our communities. It must never happen again. The police must put down their weapons. We have been saying this since the beginning. We cannot walk around in fear in our own homes anymore."

Detailed statements from the Mr. Ned Jampijinpa Hargraves, the Walker family and Ms. Valerie Napaljarri Martin can be found attached.