

UK news

Chester woman, 55, arrested over false posts about Southport murders

Woman arrested on suspicion of publishing written material to stir up racial hatred as police warn of misinformation



📷 Tributes to the young children killed in the knife attack in Southport 10 days ago. Photograph: Gary Calton/The Observer

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A 55-year-old woman has been arrested in relation to a social media post containing inaccurate information about the identity of the suspect in the Southport murders.

The woman, from near Chester, was arrested on Thursday on suspicion of publishing written material to stir up racial hatred and false communications. She is being held in custody by Cheshire police.

Ch Supt Alison Ross said: “We have all seen the violent disorder that has taken place across the UK over the past week, much of which has been fuelled by malicious and inaccurate communications online.

“It’s a stark reminder of the dangers of posting information on social media platforms without checking the accuracy. It also acts as a warning that we are all accountable for our actions, whether that be online or in person.”

Police across the UK have issued warnings over the spreading online of an “incorrect” name for the Southport suspect - now named as 17-year-old Axel Rudakubana - and a false story around his background.

Sunder Katwala, director of the thinktank British Future, highlighted a number of high-profile online figures, including Laurence Fox and former kickboxer Andrew Tate, who were “sharing that false information” on X.

A number of experts said this misinformation had been used by a “vocal minority” to sow division and “fuel their own agenda and trigger a summer of thrill-seeking impulsive insurrection” after violent disorder in the days since the attack.

On Thursday evening a 39-year-old from Lancashire was arrested on suspicion of using social media to encourage others to take part in violent disorder, Merseyside police said.

The man from Rufford, Ormskirk, was held on suspicion of encouraging or assisting the commission of an indictable offence, believing one or more will be committed. He was also arrested on suspicion of engaging in violent disorder himself in Southport on 30 July.

DCI Tony Roberts said: “This arrest demonstrates our aim is not only to bring to justice those people who chose to engage in violence and destruction to Southport and elsewhere.

“We are also determined to arrest anyone we suspect tried to stir up hate online, and actively encouraged others to take the streets to cause violence and physical harm in our communities.”

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