

## Hunt for the statue wreckers: Police issue CCTV images of 15 people they want to speak to about the day slaver and philanthropist Edward Colston's statue was toppled and thrown into the dock in Bristol as officers CHOSE not to intervene

- Edward Colston was a 17th century merchant and philanthropist who built schools and churches in England
- His statue in Bristol was toppled by Black Lives Matters protestors on June 7 and thrown into Bristol Harbour
- The sculpture was widely condemned by activists due to Colston's links to the Atlantic slave trade
- Avon and Somerset Police have released CCTV images of 15 individuals connected to the incident
- Home Secretary Priti Patel described the vandalism as 'utterly disgraceful' and 'completely unacceptable'

By [SAM BLITZ FOR MAILONLINE](#)

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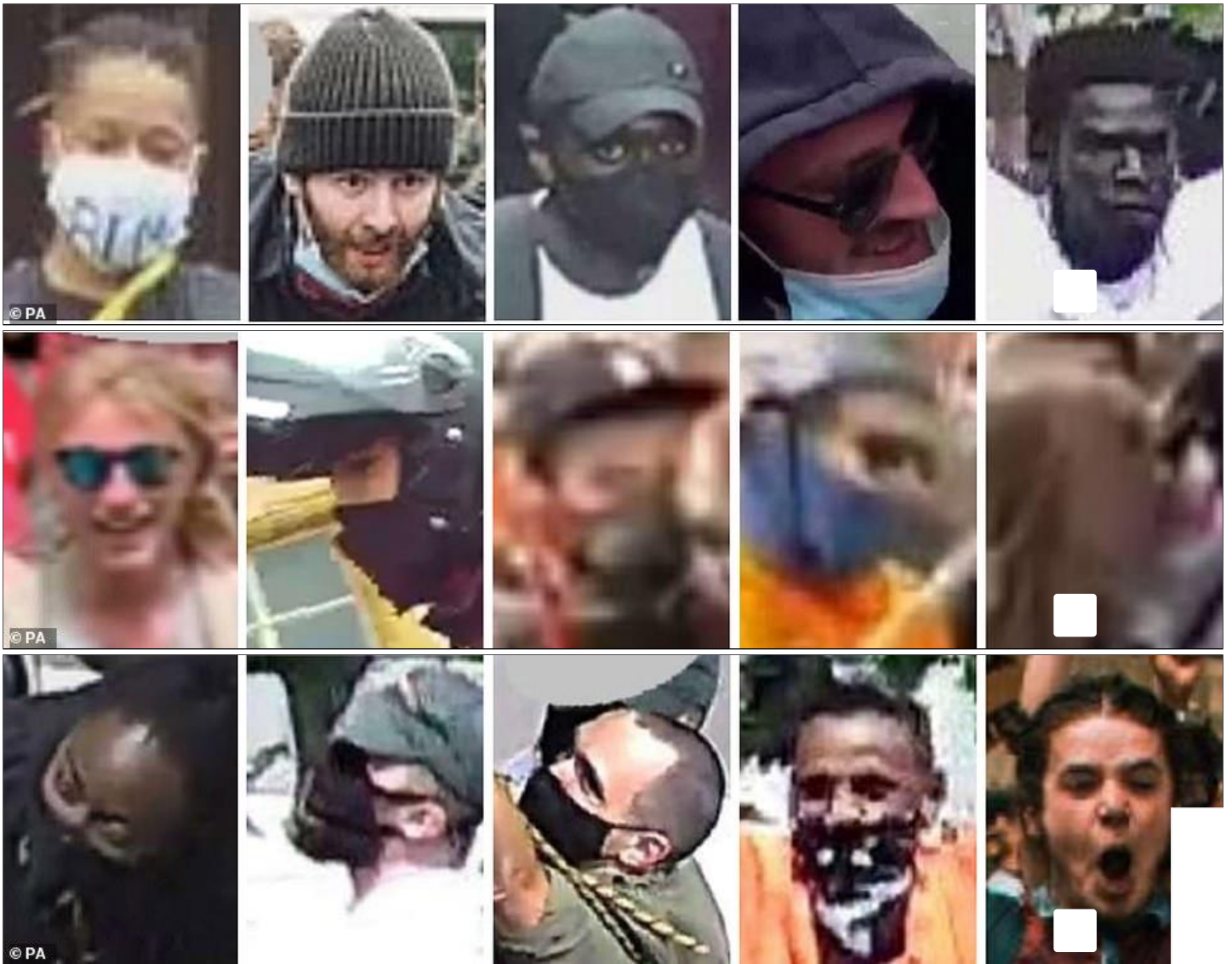
Police have released images of 15 individuals they want to speak to in relation to the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol by **Black Lives Matter** protestors.

The statue commemorating the 17th century merchant was dramatically pulled from its plinth by protestors at 2.30pm on June 7 after being attacked and vandalised with graffiti.

Demonstrators then pushed the monument into Bristol Harbour near the city centre, with Avon and Somerset police launching a criminal investigation following the incident after the force's officers chose not to intervene during the incident.

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Avon and Somerset Police have asked the public to help identify 15 individuals captured on CCTV (pictured) in connection with the toppling of the Edward Colston statue in Bristol on June 7

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The statue, which commemorates the 17th century merchant, was taken down from its plinth by Black Lives Matter protesters before being thrown into Bristol Harbour (pictured: stock images not part of police appeal). The incident took place at around 2.30pm.

Detective Superintendent Liz Hughes called for the public to help police identify the CCTV images, saying: 'We've made a small handful of identifications and we've spoken to some of those individuals.'

'They will be coming in for voluntary interviews in the coming days.'

'However, despite every effort being made to identify the remaining people we'd like to talk to, we still don't know who they are which is why we're now releasing images of them in the hope the public can help.'

'Some of the images are not as clear as we'd like, and some of those we want to identify are wearing masks but we're confident someone will know them and be able to provide us with their name.'

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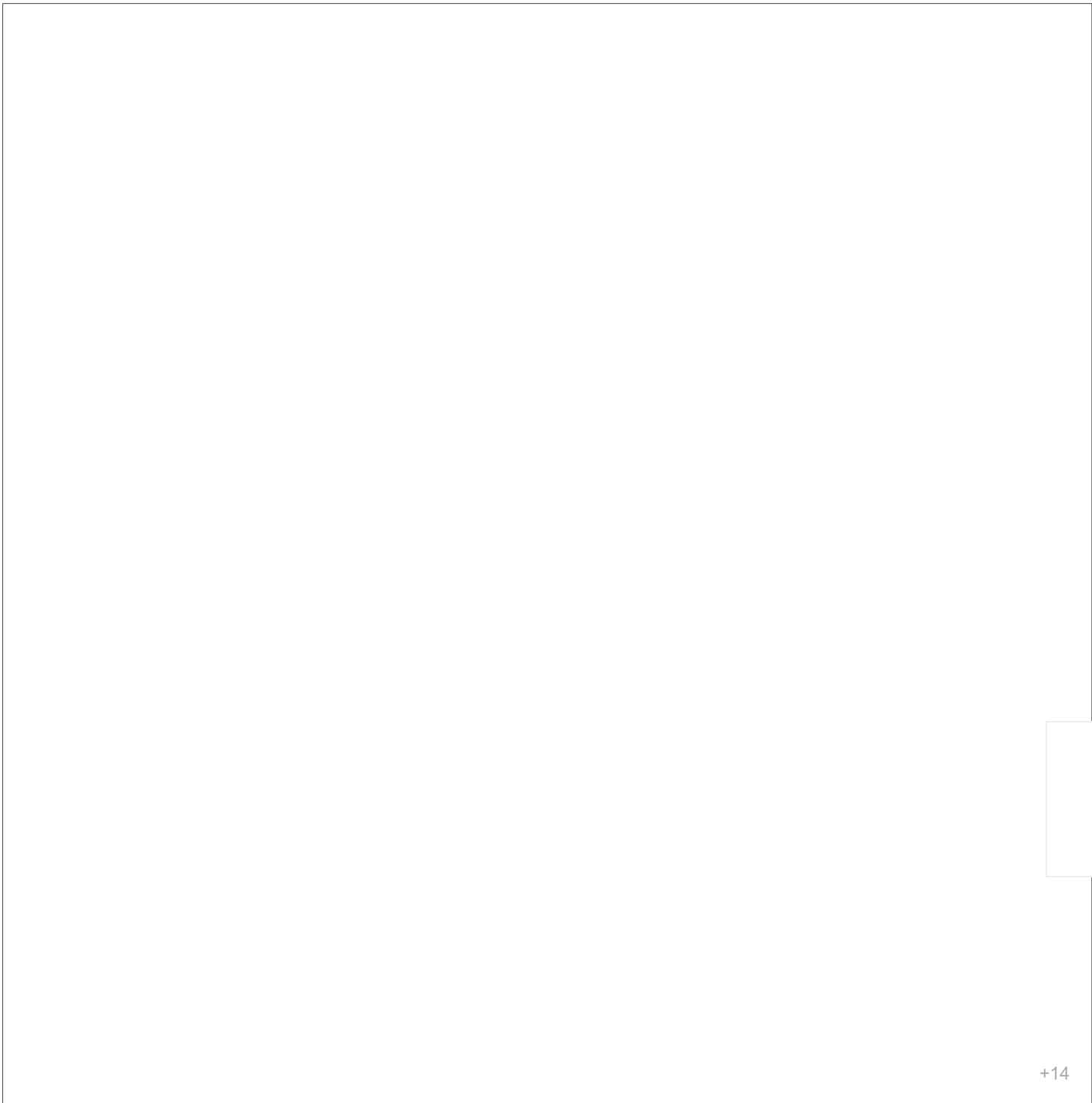


© Harry Pugsley / SWNS

Protestors attacked the statue and sprayed it with graffiti, before pulling down the monument (pictured), which received criticism over Colston's role in the Atlantic slave trade. (Note: this is a stock image and is not related to the police appeal)

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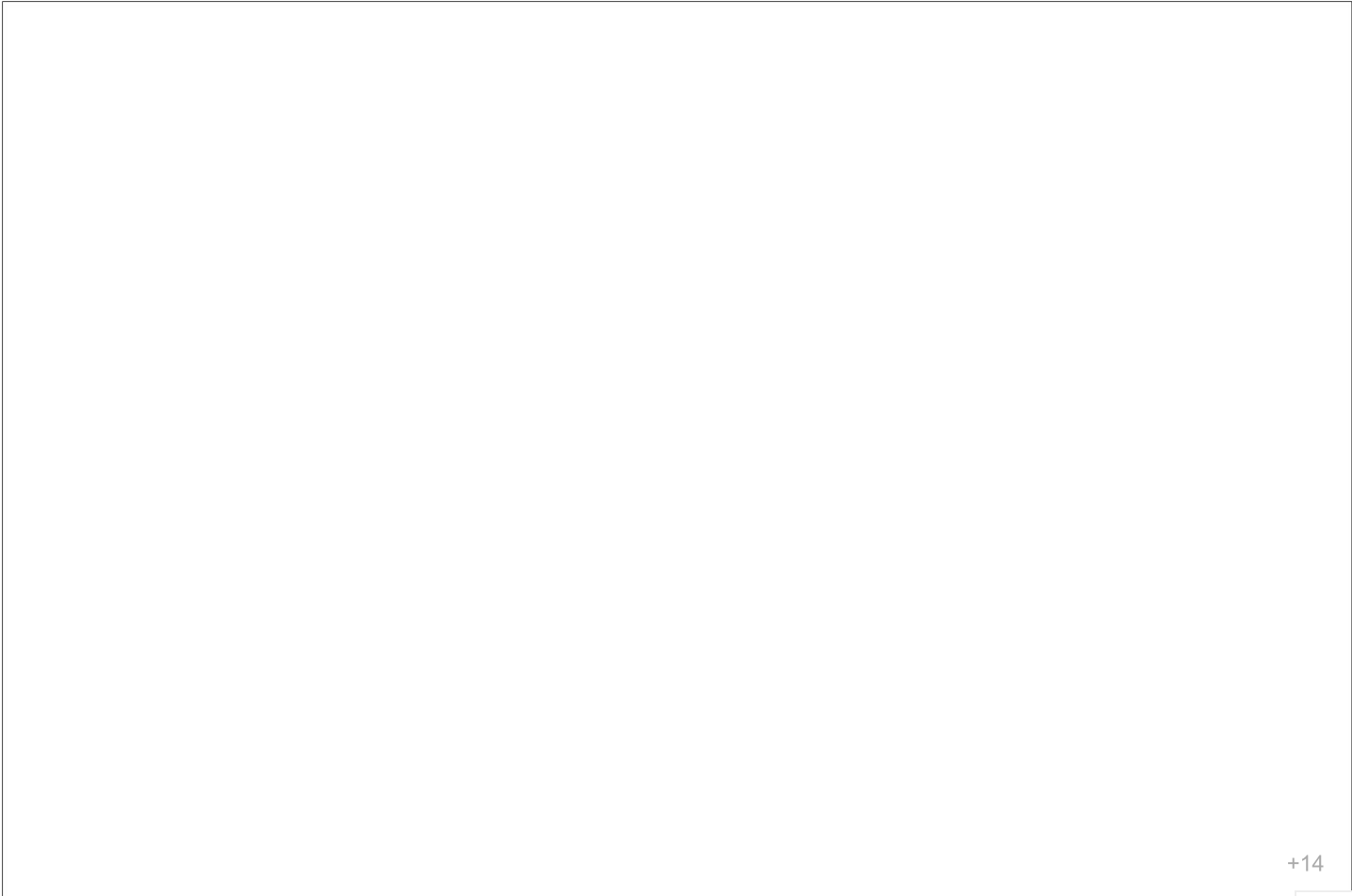


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**The Grade II-listed sculpture was created in 1895 and recognised Colston's philanthropic acts, which include building schools, hospitals and churches in Bristol, London and other areas**

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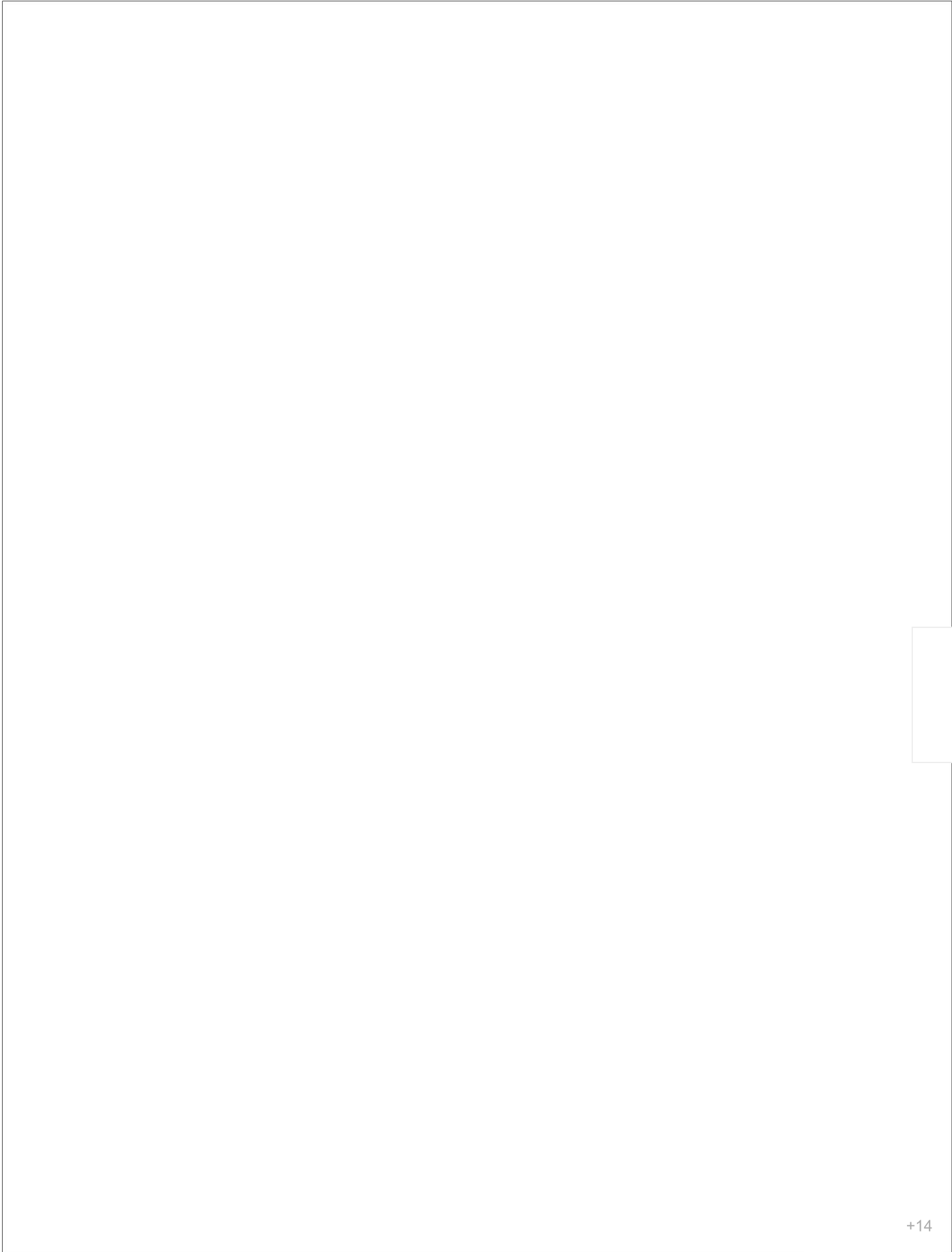
**Protestors then threw the statue into the water, with Avon and Somerset police officers choosing not to intervene. The force then launched a criminal investigation a short time later. (Note: this is a stock image not related to the police appeal)**

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**Colston's statue was the subject of controversy as Colston is believed to have earned some of his fortune b  
selling of slaves. (Note: this is a stock image not related to the police appeal)**

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[Bristol BLM protesters push statue of slaver into water](#)

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When the statue was taken out of the harbour's water, it was taken to Bristol City Council where it has since been kept in safe storage.

The monument was created in 1895 by sculptor John Cassidy and commemorates the merchant's philanthropic works across England, such as helping to create schools, almshouses, hospitals and churches.

However, the Grade II listed sculpture has been the subject of intense criticism due to Colston's role in the Atlantic slave trade. It is believed the merchant made some of his fortune by buying and selling slaves.

The toppling of the statue earlier this month was condemned by major political figures, with Home Secretary Priti Patel describing the vandalism as 'utterly disgraceful' and 'completely unacceptable'.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson branded the incident as a 'criminal act' and called for police to take action against the protestors involved, while Sir Keir Starmer described the manner in which the statue was toppled was 'completely wrong'.

However, Bristol Mayor Marvin Rees argued: 'I am of Jamaican heritage and I cannot pretend ... it was anything other than a personal affront to me to have it in the middle of Bristol.'

Det Supt Hughes added: 'The incident attracted worldwide attention and there's no denying it has polarised public opinion - but in the eyes of the law a crime has been committed and we're duty-bound to investigate this without fear or favour.

'I'd like to reassure people we're carrying out a thorough, fair and proportionate investigation and have sought early investigative advice from the Crown Prosecution Service.'

## New laws proposed to crackdown on statue vandalism

The **Justice Secretary** says laws prohibiting the desecration of war memorials are 'inadequate' and has pledged to make sure vandalism is properly punished.

Robert Buckland said there is 'no justification' for writing political slogans on the statue of Winston Churchill or climbing atop the Cenotaph to burn the Union Jack - adding that the Government will bring in legislation to allow harsher punishments.



Mr Robert Buckland (pictured)

Following a campaign by more than 120 MPs, backbenchers will present the proposed Desecration of War Memorials Bill this week, **Telegraph** reports.

Ministers have been considering legislation that says desecrating war memorials carry a sentence of up to 10 years in prison.

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Anyone with information relating to the CCTV images has been asked to contact the Avon and Somerset Police on 101, providing the reference number 5220123926, or anonymously via the Crimestoppers charity.

Edward Colston's statue was not the only monument under threat from protestors this week. Two days after the Bristol sculpture fell at the hands of demonstrators, a monument to slaveholder Robert Milligan was removed from the London Docklands.

Liverpool University has announced it will rename a hall of residence dedicated to 19th century Prime Minister William Gladstone, whose father was one of the biggest slaveholders in the West Indies.

Last week, Oriel College at Oxford University voted to remove a statue of Cecil Rhodes, who believed in white supremacy.

Backbenchers will present a proposed Desecration of War Memorials Bill this week. MPs have called for jail terms of up to ten years.



## Police issue 12 new CCTV images of people they want to question after violence surround Black Lives Matter demos in London earlier this month

By Milly Vincent For MailOnline

Police have released a further 12 CCTV images of people they want to speak to in relation to violent clashes in **London** this month.

Violence broke out over recent weeks between **Black Lives Matter** protesters and people claiming to be protecting statues in the capital.

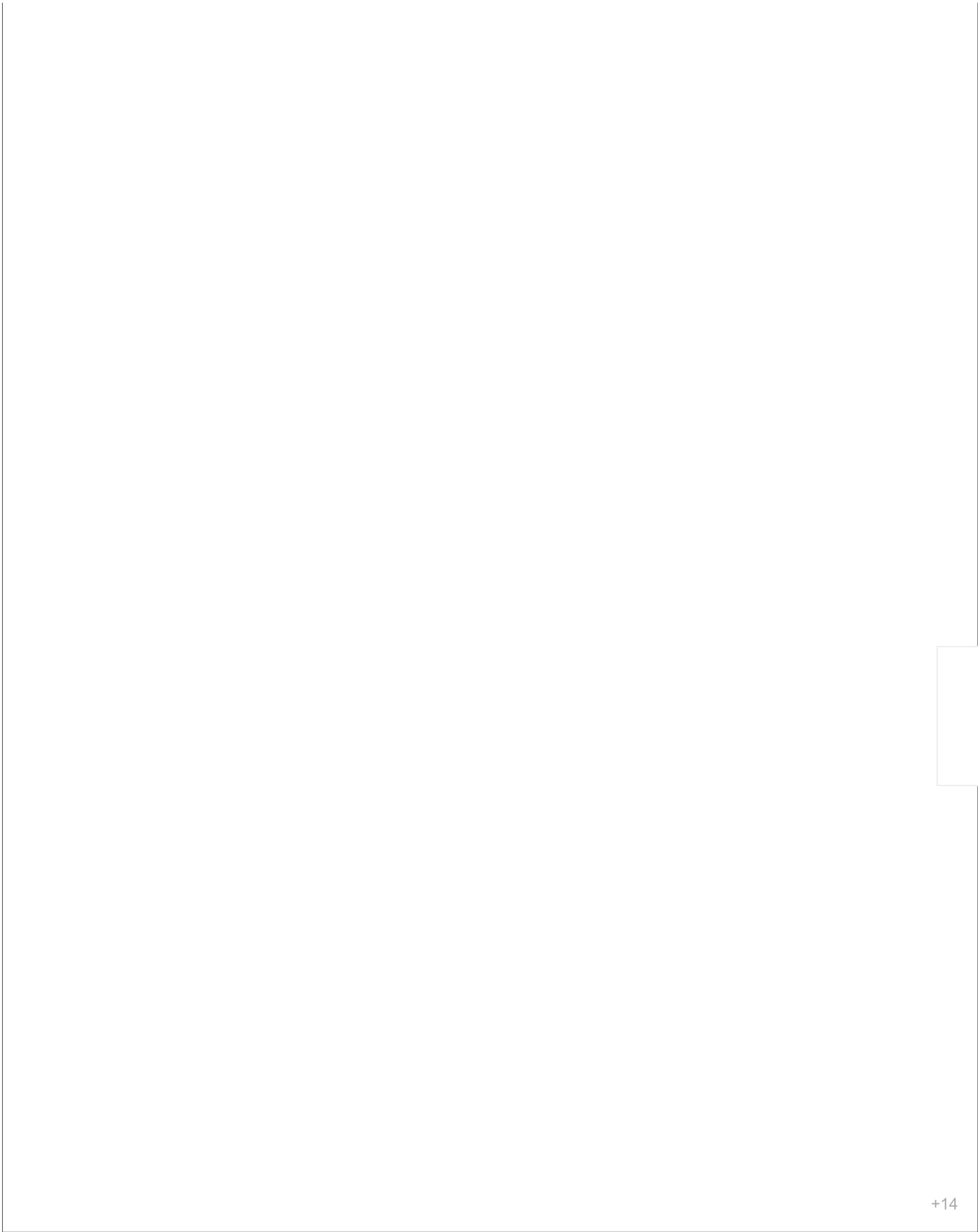
The latest pictures from the Metropolitan Police feature people who are believed to have engaged in racial abuse and serious violence against members of the public and police officers.

Commander Alex Murray described the behaviour of those in the images as 'abhorrent' and 'highly offensive'.

The appeal for information on 12 individuals today comes in addition to the 48 others, who have been pictured by the Metropolitan Police over the last three days.

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**Undated handout comp photo issued by the Metropolitan Police of persons police wish to speak to following the violent clashes in London during recent demonstrations. Issued Sunday June 21**

Detectives have been analysing hours of CCTV, body worn video from officers and footage which circulated on social media to ensure those who committed offences are identified and are brought to the attention of the Metropolitan Police, a spokesman said.

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Commander Murray has since confirmed members of the public had already helped to identify people from the images.

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He said: 'Our investigation into the various acts of violence, racial abuse and disorder by a small minority of those attending protests in London in recent weeks continues and we're releasing a further 12 images today of people we would like to identify in relation to this.'



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**Police fight to maintain control in Trafalgar Square amid both Black Lives Matter and pro-statue protests in London last weekend. There is no suggestion those pictured here and below are wanted by police**

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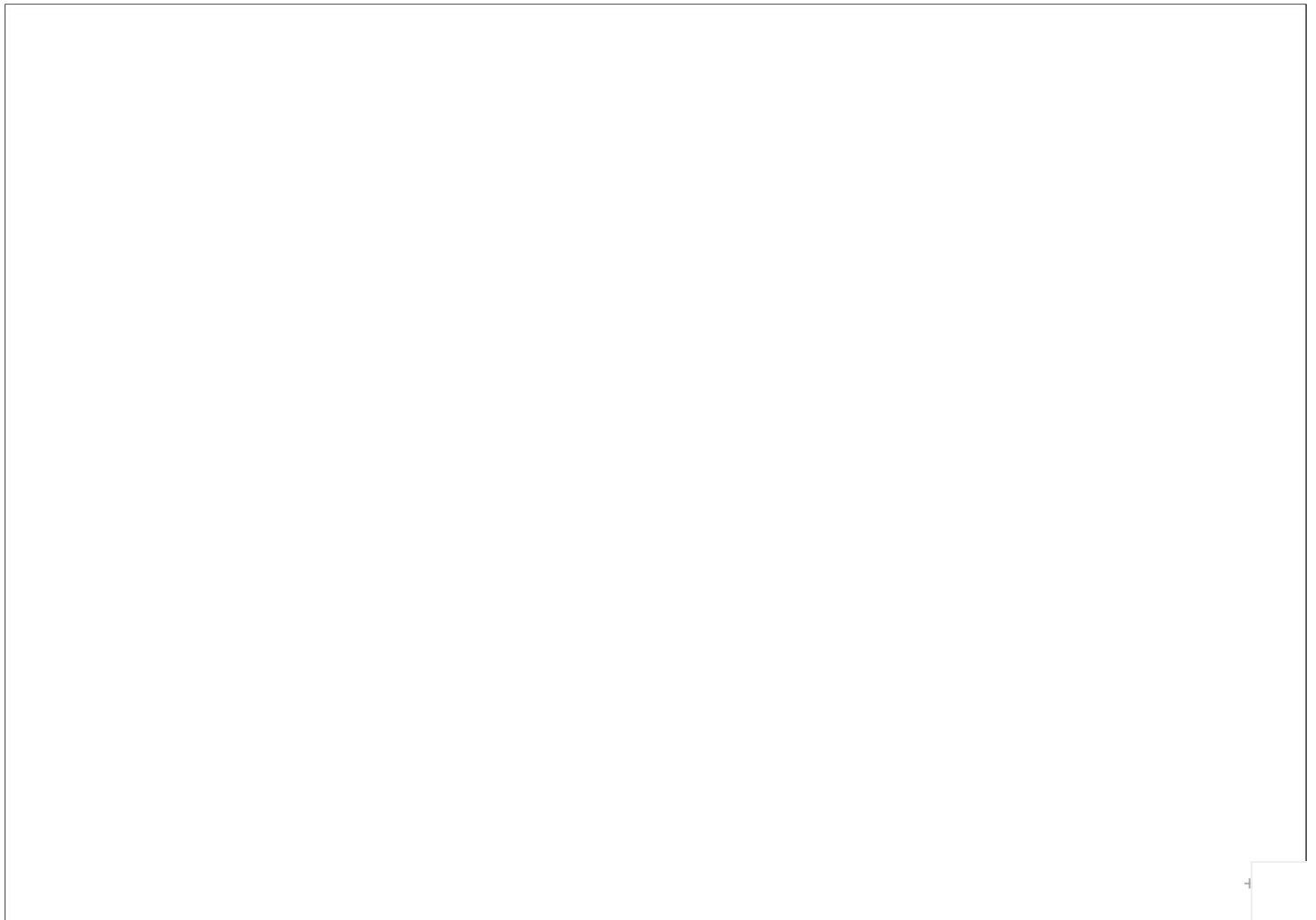
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**A man identified as a far-right protester was carried to safety from protesters as animosity was briefly set aside on a day of clashes in London between rival groups and police**

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**Pictures also caught the moment another white counter-protester was left with a bloodied face after being hit during a scuffle with protesters**

'These images are in addition to the 48 we have already released over the past few days. We have already seen a really positive response from the public, which is helping us with our enquiries to identify those who were involved, so that they can be brought to justice.'

Commander Murray said: 'The vast majority of people who have attended the recent protests made their voices heard, and then left. However, a minority have attended with the sole purpose of attacking, abusing or violently confronting fellow protesters, detracting from the cause of their protest.'

'We saw violence against police officers including verbal and racial abuse which is absolutely appalling. They do not come to work to be subjected to this. They come to work to keep Londoners and their families safe. Similarly, those people who wanted to have their voices heard and protest should not be subject to violence from others.'

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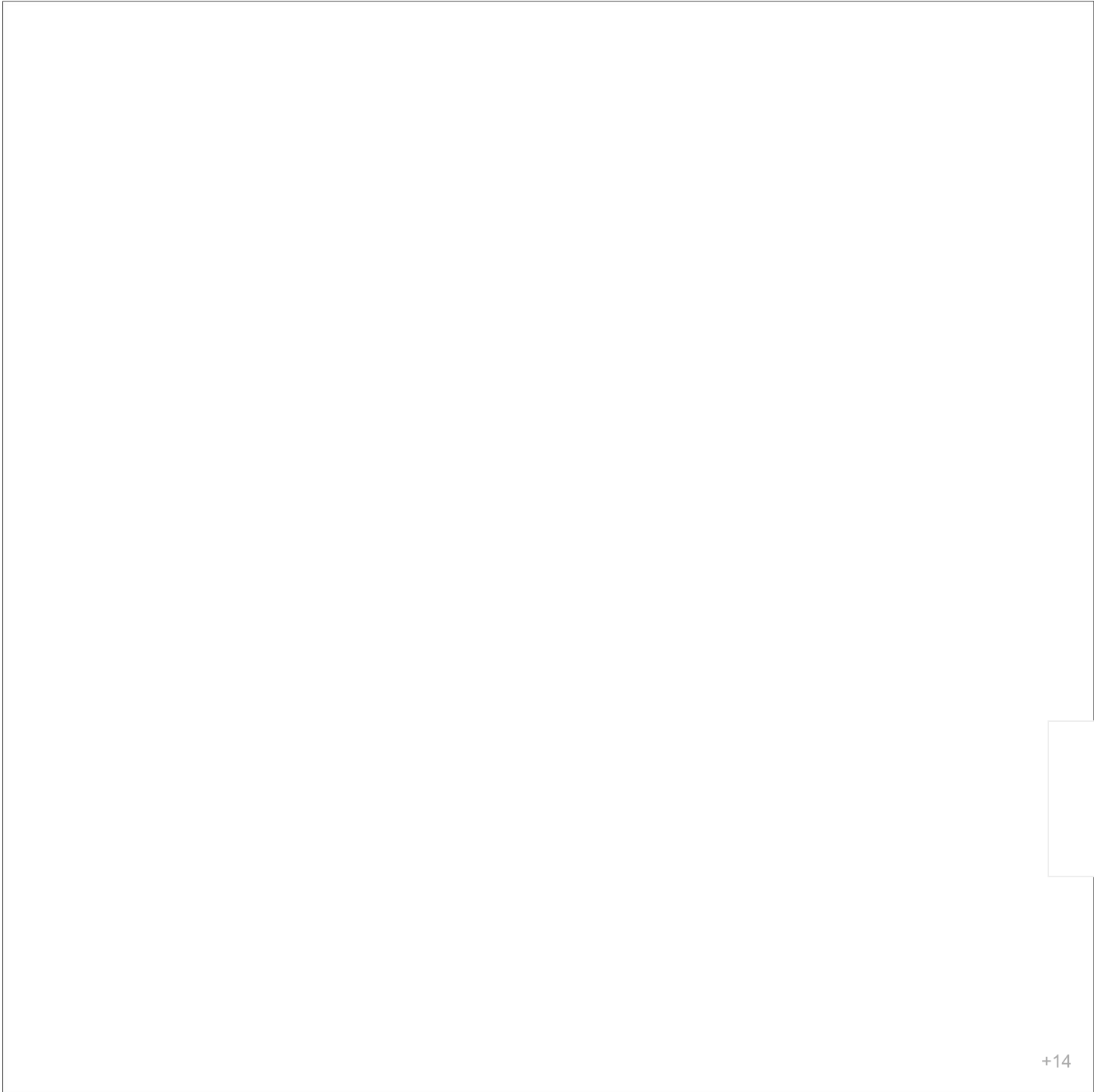


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**Police armed with shields and riot gear reinforced the blockade on Whitehall as louts rushed up the police line**

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**Images released by police earlier this week of 13 people they want to speak to in connection with violence at protests in London this month**

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**Ministers are believed to be considering sentences of up to 10 years for the worst offenders, after the Cenotaph and a statue of wartime leader Winston Churchill were targeted by Black Lives Matter protesters**



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**Activists, some wearing face coverings or face masks as a precautionary measure against COVID-19, hold a Black Lives Matter protest march to Trafalgar Square in London on June 12.**

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### Police and counter-protesters defend Churchill statue amid protest

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'Whilst investigations are underway to identify those we suspect of being involved in these offences, we ask members of the public to make it clear that they also will not tolerate such behaviour by helping us to identify these individuals and report anyone they recognise in the pictures.'

'Thank you to those who have already helped to identify people from the images – your help is having a real and positive effect on our investigation. Thank you also to those people who have actively challenged other protesters to stop them being violent and abusive.'

Black Lives Matter protests erupted worldwide following the death of George Floyd, 46, who died after police officer Derek Chauvin put his knee on his neck in Minneapolis on May 25 for nine minutes.

Demonstrators flooded the streets across Britain in protests against racial injustice and police brutality.

While many protests remained peaceful, police and demonstrators were pictured suffering injuries during brawls at demonstrations.

Statues and monuments to controversial figures from Britain's imperial past have become the focal point of many demonstrations since a statue of 17th century slave trader Edward Colston was torn down in Bristol and dumped in the harbour.

Several hundred demonstrators, mostly white men, attended a protest organised by far-right groups, including Britain First, last weekend, claiming they wanted to protect statues such as Winston Churchill from vandalism.

But fights erupted in areas near the Houses of Parliament and Trafalgar Square as demonstrators repeatedly hounded police officers with foul-mouthed chants and missiles, smoke grenades and flares.

Following the violent clashes, Black Lives Matter protestors and some counter protestors headed over the River Thames towards Waterloo Station.

Far right thugs have been accused of being the instigators of the violence by attacking police as well as BLM supporters, who then fought back as the scene descended into violence.

After the violent incidents, the Prime Minister said protesters desecrating war memorials will face tough new laws and warned that attacks on public property will be 'met with the full force of the law'.

Additionally, a far-right protester was jailed for 14 days for urinating next to a memorial to police officer Palmer killed in a terror attack on Parliament, while at a demo ostensibly trying to protect statues

Mr Johnson also insisted he is a 'huge admirer' of one of his aides who has previously questioned institutional racism and hit out at a 'culture of grievance' among anti-racism campaigners.

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Anyone with information about the images can contact the investigation team on 020 8246 9386 or Tweet @MetCC on Twitter.

Alternatively, they can contact Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

Those with footage of the violent clashes which could assist detectives in the police investigation are urged to send it to officers by visiting: ukpoliceimageappeal.co.uk.

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