

# Do we have the right to question police violence?

Published: May 3, 2026, 9:55 am

---

Trevor Phillips, ever the New Labour and neoliberal apologist, interviewed Green Party leader Zach Polanski on Sky this morning and aggressively sought an answer to this question:

*What were you thinking when you reposted an item on X criticising the Metropolitan police officers who had just arrested a man who had attacked two Jewish people?*

The tone was accusatory. The subtext was clearly that Phillips was asking Polanski whether he (himself a Jew) was an antisemite?

There are several points to make.

The first is that Phillips did not frame the question in the context of the man arrested also having attacked Muslim that day. Only Jews apparently matter to the media and Phillips, and that is itself antisemitic framing.

Secondly, Phillips effectively endorsed Met Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley when making the comment, implying that this was an operational matter and beyond political questioning, when the police are public servants, necessarily subject to political control and scrutiny. Rowley's comment was dangerously far down a fascist path by suggesting the police are beyond that, and Phillips seemed to be going in the same direction.

Thirdly, what Polanski thought should have been obvious to anyone with an iota of sense, compassion or even just understanding of what they were seeing. We saw two Met officers approach a man, stunned and lying on the ground, obviously unable to resist arrest and equally obviously unable to release the knife he held because the tasers used on him would have prevented his nervous system from reacting to that command (as the police should have known), then being kicked forcefully and with venom in the head (a target that was clearly deliberately chosen) with all the possible injurious consequences of that. I suspect Zach Polanski had three names in mind, as I did, when watching this. They are those of George Floyd, Renée Nicole Good and Alex Pretti.

They all died as a result of unacceptable and violent police action during the course of arrest. My first thought when viewing the video was that I hoped both police officers would be charged for their conduct - and I still think they should be.

And don't accuse me of being an antisemite for thinking that. I refuse to be called or be any such thing. I call it out when I see it. I always condemn it. I always will. And don't tell me I don't know what I am talking about. I grew up with a very obvious Irish surname in the 70s. I know what discrimination against someone who is white on the grounds of their ethnicity can feel like. I saw, in particular, the impact this had on my father and the fear it created. I have enormous sympathy for those suffering antisemitism now.

But that does not in any way justify police kicking a man already down, and stunned into submission, repeatedly in the head.

It does not justify the Met Police Commissioner publicly criticising a politician questioning what looked like excessive police violence, something which has a long history in this country, much of it racist. The day we cannot do that, we really do have a police state. Is that what Rowley wants?

And it does not justify the neoliberal establishment seeking to use this as a mechanism to attack Zach Polanski because he might expose their many failings, which they would rather he did not do.

The only mistake Polanski has made is in not explaining this well enough, although he did a good job defending himself this morning, making clear that his questions remain and he will be raising them, just not on X, the use of which is all that he has apologised for, and rightly so.