Police want power to release more details on some cases



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Police want the freedom to release more details of some investigations in an effort to prevent misinformation that could result in threats to public safety or national security.In a submission to a review of contempt of court laws, three national policing bodies have said that they should be allowed to say more when a "tipping point" is reached and accusations of a cover-up could result in violence.

It follows the Southport knife attack in July, when misinformation about the attacker snowballed on social media, which Merseyside Police did not initially counter, leading to riots across the UK.Current laws prevent certain details in ongoing criminal cases being published before a trial, so that it does not prejudice the Merseyside Police was criticised for not giving early details of Axel Rudakubana, the man later convicted of the murders of three young girls in Southport, when posts on social media falsely suggested he was an asylum seeker and potentially an Islamist extremist.

The early police communications strategy was based on advice from prosecutors, the force's chief previously said.Now, there is a review examining Britain's strict laws on what can be published during an ongoing criminal investigation and how the justice system should respond to breaches.In its submission to the review, the National Police Chiefs' Council, College of Policing and Counter Terrorism Policing said the criminal justice system should reach a "collective view" of how to balance the need for a defendant to get a fair trial and the need to maintain public order.

"We would welcome recognition of the role unchecked misinformation and disinformation about high profile criminal incidents, that rightly concern the public, can have in creating a febrile environment where the risks of disorder breaking out is higher," the submissions stated."We would like the legal framework to acknowledge that this risk We do believe there is room to offer stronger reassurance in cases where a tipping point has been reached and where releasing information that could help counter misinformation and disinformation to address public safety risks would be helpful.

"Flexibility is required to mitigate the clear risks to public safetyThe police submission points out that in other countries more information is made public.."