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## Audience hijacks hall to see deaths in custody film

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An audience took over Conway Hall in central London and defied threats of legal action so they could see a controversial film which names eight police officers as being responsible for the deaths of people in custody.

Police were called when about 150 people barricaded themselves in the hall last night and took over the projector to ensure the screening of the movie, called Injustice, went ahead. Staff tried to stop the event by opening a skylight and turning on the lights to make it difficult to see the screen.

Ken Fero, co-director with Tariq Mehmood of the 98minute documentary, said the Trustees of Conway Hall had received threats of legal action. Mr Mehmood said: "When we booked the place they knew what the film was about. We got legal opinion of this to cover Conway Hall and we gave them that legal advice."

The film examines the lives and deaths of black people who died in police custody. A planned screening last week was halted when the cinema owners received a letter from solicitors representing two of the officers and decided not to go ahead.

The film identifies officers believed by relatives to be responsible for the deaths. None of the officers concerned was convicted of any crime.

Myrna Simpson, the mother of Joy Gardner & who died after being restrained by Metropolitan Police officers & aid after the screening: "I don't see anything wrong with the film, why would anybody want to stop it? It's just the facts that have happened and people are just speaking their mind. Since 1969 no police officer has been prosecuted for a death in custody."

Other cases highlighted in the film include Brian Douglas who died after being hit by a police baton during a stop and search in Clapham in May 1995 and Shiji Lapite, who died after being restrained by officers in Clapton in December 1994. Pathologists reported between 36 and 45 separate injuries. A coroner's jury returned a unanimous verdict of unlawful killing but the Crown Prosecution Service decided not to pursue the case.

A spokesman for Conway Hall was unavailable for comment.