



ROBBERS RAID ROLEX STORE

EXCLUSIVE No-go Knightsbridge: Residents claim exclusive area is 'no longer a billionaires playground' as everyone with real money has fled the tyranny of ram-raiding gangs and moped driving machete thugs who rule the streets

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One of London's most exclusive neighbourhoods is seeing billionaires flee and house sales plummet amid **Rachel Reeves'** tax rises and rampant street **crime**.

Knightsbridge, home to a string of high end stores such as Harrods and littered with multi-million pound properties, is seeing homes priced at their cheapest in 15 years.

As well as Reeves' mansion tax putting off super rich buyers, crime rates have remained high as gangs on mopeds divide up areas and target tourists and the wealthy, sources say.

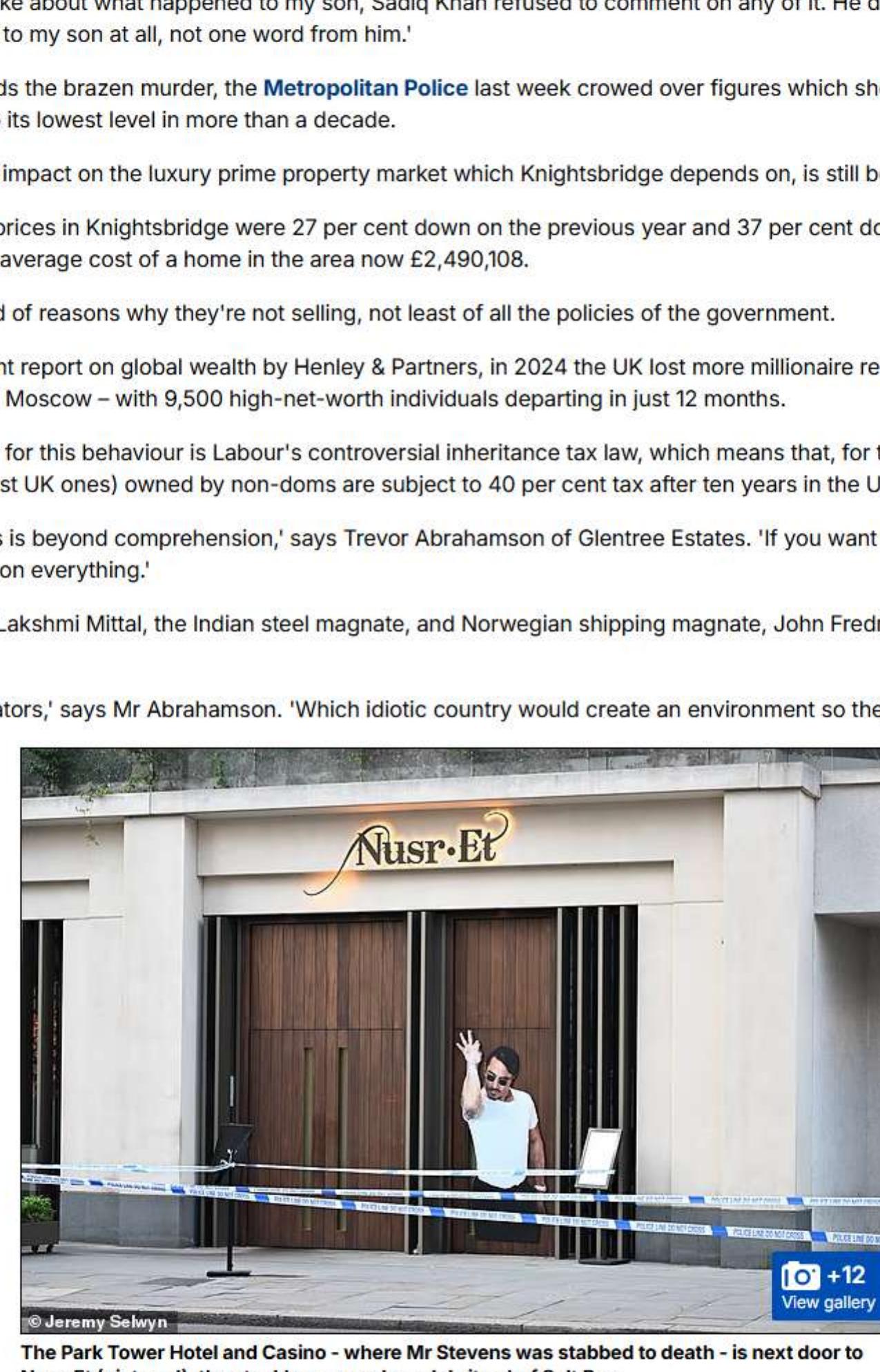
On Tuesday, machete-wielding robbers threatened customers as they raided a Rolex store and took a number of high value items during a terrifying three-minute raid shortly before 11am.

Wearing helmets, the thugs smashed cabinets and looted the store before taking off on mopeds parked outside.

The store is on the ground floor of the luxurious One Hyde Park building, which billionaire Reform treasurer **Nick Candy** constructed with his brother in 2009.

Candy, who is married to Australian singer Holly Valance, still reportedly owns a penthouse on the block.

The daylight raid came just weeks after Loro Piana, a luxury Italian fashion brand a short walk from Harrods, saw its own store looted.



Shortly before 3am on December 16, cops were called after a car had smashed into the front of the shop.

Items including clothing and handbags were stolen and the suspects fled before officers arrived.

Police are still investigating and no arrests have yet been made, the Met said.

Hoardings are still up around the store while the Rolex boutique remained closed this week with staff cleaning debris inside following the attack on Tuesday.

A security guard at one high-end restaurant, who lives in the area but did not want to be named, said different gangs rule the streets.

'They divide it up, some on foot, many on mopeds. I see a lot around here and, honestly, tourists would be far safer going to some of the roughest areas of the East End than they would spending time in Knightsbridge.'

'Then there are the gangs with the pimps who operate the prostitutes not too far from here.'

'In a rich area like this it is always going to attract criminals.'

'I'm not surprised people are leaving.'

The latest monthly figures released by the Met Police, from November, show crime rates in Knightsbridge and Belgravia have stayed largely the same for years.

Some 295 offences were committed in Knightsbridge and Belgravia in November, with almost a third of them carried out close to the iconic Harrods store.

Since the day of the robbery this week, neighbourhood policing has increased in the area, the Met says, while it also reports that criminals are now migrating from mopeds to e-bikes to carry out thefts.

Discussing the Rolex robbery, one man who lives a five minute walk away said: 'Honestly, that's pretty normal around here.'

'Lots of shops around here now have queuing systems which they say is to regulate the flow, but it's also so they can keep an eye on exactly who is coming in and follow them around the stores.'

As well as robberies and regular reports of mobile phone thefts, 24-year-old Blue Stevens was stabbed to death in July last year near luxury hotel The Park Tower Knightsbridge, just a stone's throw from the Rolex store.

Mr Stevens' killer remains at large.

Last week, his mother accused **Sadiq Khan** of 'celebrating' London's falling homicide rates while her 'beautiful boy lies in his grave'.

