

The Mirror article – Madeleine McCann’s parents officially cleared as police shelve investigation

July 21, 2008. Updated February 21, 2012.

Gerry and Kate McCann have spoken of their 'devastation and utter despair' at being named suspects in their daughter Madeleine's disappearance after Portuguese police shelved their investigation.

The couple welcomed prosecutors' decision to lift their status as "arguidos", or formal suspects, and clear them of any involvement with their daughter's disappearance, but said they had no cause for celebration.

Kate McCann said: "It is hard to describe how utterly despairing it was to be named arguidos and subsequently portrayed in the media as suspects in our own daughter's abduction.

"It has been equally devastating to witness the detrimental effect this status has had on the search for Madeleine."

The McCanns, both 40, looked drawn and tired as they addressed a press conference in their home village of Rothley, Leicestershire.

Mrs McCann read a brief statement in which she made a fresh appeal for information about Madeleine's whereabouts and thanked their supporters.

She said the couple were looking forward to "scrutinising" the police files to see what could still be done to look for their eldest daughter.

Her husband, Gerry, refused to rule out either going back to Portugal or taking legal action against the Portuguese authorities.

Mr McCann said: "We don't have any immediate plans to return to Portugal at the moment.

"Obviously we want to digest the statement and also to get access to the files to see what can still be done."

He said any legal action would be "secondary" to finding their daughter.

"Our priority has always been the search for Madeleine and that will be what will be very much prioritised in the coming weeks," he said.

Portuguese prosecutors announced today that they had no evidence that the three suspects in the case committed any crimes, after 14 months and an exhaustive investigation.

As a result they shelved the case and lifted the "arguido", or formal suspect, status of the McCanns and Algarve resident Robert Murat.

Portuguese attorney-general Fernando Jose Pinto Monteiro's office said that the inquiry can be re-opened if credible new evidence comes to light.

McCann family spokesman Clarence Mitchell said that Gerry and Kate were "relieved" to be cleared but there is "no degree of celebration".

He said: "They should never have been arguidos. The fact that they have emerged from this without being charged proves that."

He added: "They are a wronged couple. For the past nine to 10 months they have had this agony as well as the pain of losing their daughter."

He added that their treatment as suspects had been a "distraction" from the main task of finding Madeleine.

"All of this has damaged their good reputations and they will have to assess where they go from here," he said.

"The only thing they care about is finding Madeleine. We hope that the Portuguese authorities will continue to cooperate with their private investigation."

Now the case has been shelved, the McCanns want their own private investigators to be given access to the police files so they can continue the search for their daughter.

They've been told they will be able to examine the police files on Madeleine's disappearance by the end of the week.

Madeleine was nearly four when she vanished from her family's holiday apartment in Praia da Luz as her parents dined in a tapas restaurant with friends nearby.

Timeline of search for missing Maddey

2007

May 3 - Kate and Gerry McCann, from Rothley, Leicestershire, leave their three children asleep in their holiday apartment in Praia da Luz in southern Portugal while they dine with friends at a nearby tapas restaurant.

There is nothing amiss when Mr McCann checks on the youngsters at just after 9pm, but when his wife goes back at about 10pm she finds three-year-old Madeleine missing.

Jane Tanner, one of the friends eating with the Mccanns, later reports seeing a man carrying a child away earlier that night.

May 5 - Portuguese police reveal they believe Madeleine was abducted but is still alive and in Portugal, and say they have a sketch of a suspect.

May 14 - Detectives take Anglo-Portuguese ex-pat Robert Murat in for questioning and make him an "arguido", or official suspect.

Officers also search the home he shares with his mother in Praia Da Luz, just 100 yards from where the youngster was snatched.

May 25 - Detectives finally release the description of the man reported by Jane Tanner three weeks earlier following pressure from the McCanns, their legal team and the British Government.

May 30 - Mr and Mrs McCann meet the Pope in Rome in the first of a series of trips around Europe and beyond to highlight the search for their daughter.

August 6 - A Portuguese newspaper reports that British sniffer dogs have found traces of blood on a wall in the McCanns' holiday apartment.

August 11 - Exactly 100 days after Madeleine disappeared, investigating officers publicly acknowledge for the first time that she could be dead.

August 31 – The McCanns launch a libel action against newspaper Tal & Qual over a front-page story which claimed police believe they killed their daughter.

September 7 - During further questioning of Mr and Mrs McCann, detectives make them both "arguidos" in their daughter's disappearance.

September 9 – The McCanns fly back to England with their two-year-old twins Sean and Amelie.

October 2 - Goncalo Amaral, the detective in charge of the inquiry, is removed from the case after criticising the British police in a Portuguese newspaper interview.

October 9 - The case is taken over by Paulo Rebelo, a senior detective with Portugal's investigative Policia Judiciaria who is normally based in Lisbon.

October 25 – The McCanns release a new artist's impression drawn by an FBI-trained expert showing the man described by Jane Tanner.

November 1 – Mr McCann returns to work as a consultant cardiologist at Leicester's Glenfield Hospital.

November 19 - A BBC Panorama documentary screens a video of Mr McCann speaking of his belief that a "predator" was watching his family in the days before Madeleine's disappearance.

In the same programme Mr Murat's mother, Jenny Murat, accuses three of the McCanns' friends of lying about seeing her son on the night of May 3.

November 22 - Portugal's attorney-general, Fernando Jose Pinto Monteiro, says the huge publicity surrounding Madeleine's disappearance could have resulted in her kidnapper killing her.

December 13 - Francisco Marco, the director general of Metodo 3, a private detective agency hired by the McCanns, is quoted in a Spanish newspaper claiming he knows who took Madeleine and saying he hopes to have her back with her family before Christmas.

December 22 - Mr and Mrs McCann send a public message to their daughter, telling her: "Our only Christmas wish is for you to be back with us again."

2008

*January 9 – Mr McCann plays down speculation they may approve a film about Madeleine's disappearance after their spokesman meets the IMG agency, the firm behind the award-winning drama-documentary *Touching The Void*.*

January 20 – The McCanns release police artist sketches, based on a statement given by a British holidaymaker, of a man they believe may have abducted Madeleine.

February 4 - Portugal's top detective, Alipio Ribeiro, says in a radio interview that police were "hasty" in making Madeleine's parents suspects in her disappearance.

February 13 - Portuguese justice minister Alberto Costa says the police investigation into the young girl's disappearance is nearing its end.

March 19 - Mr and Mrs Mccann accept £550,000 libel damages and front-page apologies from Express Newspapers over allegations they were responsible for Madeleine's death.

April 7 - Three Portuguese detectives, led by Mr Rebelo, fly to Britain to re-interview the seven friends on holiday with the McCanns when Madeleine vanished.

April 10 - Speaking in Brussels, Mr and Mrs McCann call for a Europe-wide missing child alert system.

But this is overshadowed by a leak of the couple's first police interviews, which reveals that Madeleine asked her mother on the morning before she vanished: "Why didn't you come when we were crying last night?"

April 26 - In an interview for a BBC Radio 4 documentary Gerry says he believes his daughter is still "probably alive" and that there is "absolutely zero" evidence to suggest otherwise.

May 3 - A tearful Mrs McCann urges people to "pray like mad" for Madeleine as she and her family mark the first anniversary of the little girl's disappearance.

July 1 - Portuguese newspapers report that police are shelving the Madeleine investigation due to a lack of evidence - but it could be reopened if new evidence emerges.

Mr Pinto Monteiro confirms that police have handed over their lengthy final report for prosecutors to consider.

July 7 - Leicestershire Police agree to hand over to the Mccanns 81 pieces of evidence gathered in the days immediately after Madeleine disappeared.

As a result, Mr and Mrs McCann drop a High Court bid to compel the force to disclose the information.

July 16 - Mr Pinto Monteiro tells reporters in Lisbon they will be informed about a "solution" to the Madeleine case on the following Monday.

July 17 - Mr Murat receives £600,000 in libel damages from four newspaper groups over "seriously defamatory" articles connecting him with the child's disappearance.

Source: mirror.co.uk/news/madeleine-mccanns-parents-officially-cleared-729039