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Police pointed gun at kids: court claim.

By Jason Walls

Heavily armed riot police laid ‘siege’ to a Darwin Aboriginal community, rounding up children and families and pointing assault rifles at them, residents suing the Territory Government allege.

Supreme court documents reveal the court action relates to an incident in October last year when tactical police -- ‘masked and wearing camouflage, in armoured vehicles and armed with assault rifles’ – responded to a report of a person in Kulaluk Community threatening people with a gun.

The court heard lead plaintiff, Kulaluk chairwoman Helen Secretary, whose husband was the subject of the report, told police there was no gun but they responded anyway.

‘Police used loud hailers to round up residents, including children and they also conducted searches of a number of houses,’ the documents read.

Ms Secretary’s husband was arrested but later released without charge when no firearm was found.

A now struck-out statement of claim described the police operation as ‘a whole-sale police training exercise with unwitting human targets living in an indigenous community’, alleging ‘assault, false imprisonment, unlawful arrest and unlawful entry’.

Ms Secretary had argued in an affidavit that police ‘should have accepted her assurance that there was no one carrying a firearm in the community as she was the community leader’.

But in a judgment delivered late last week, Associate Justice Vince Lupino rejected that assertion saying the report ‘justified the response. Moreover, as the person suspected of having the firearm was the first plaintiff’s partner, the police had legitimate reason to doubt (her) veracity and not accept her assurances,’ he said.

In a judgment heavily critical of the residents’ statement of claim, Justice Lupino ruled many of the submissions were vague, unclear or otherwise inappropriate and should be struck out. But he allowed them another chance to ‘further attempt to properly plead a case’.

The residents have until October 4 to file another amended statement of claim.