

Gonçalo Amaral, the original senior detective in the Madeleine McCann investigation: A biography by The Madeleine Foundation



Gonçalo Amaral with his book: 'Maddie: The Truth About A Lie'

The name 'Gonçalo Amaral' is not a household name in the U.K. He was the senior Portuguese Police detective on duty when Dr Gerald McCann and Dr Kate McCann reported Madeleine missing at around 10.00pm on Thursday 3 May 2007.

In this biography, we present the facts about him which have been hidden from the British public by the mainstream British media.

In one of the most disgraceful smears of a foreigner ever perpetrated by the British mainstream media, this 50-year-old, now retired senior detective, has been portrayed as the incompetent, bungling and malicious detective who should have found missing Madeleine McCann - but instead wrongfully accused the McCanns of involvement in the disappearance of their daughter.

Words used to describe him in the British media have included: 'disgraced', 'boozy', 'fat', 'lazy', 'incompetent'. He has been described as 'sardine-munching'. He was accused of having 'long, liquid lunches'. He and his team were accused of being 'worse than the Keystone Cops'. The attack on him, especially in the British tabloids, has been relentless. It was encouraged, of course, by the McCanns and their advisers, notably ex-government media adviser Clarence Mitchell, who have accused him of deliberately putting them

in the frame when, they say, there was not one jot of evidence that they were in any way involved with the disappearance of Madeleine McCann.

This article attempts to set the record straight. It will show Gonçalo Amaral to be a highly effective detective who headed up one of the most difficult and complex criminal investigations in Portugal's recent history - that of the disappearance of eight year-old Joana Cipriano. She was a little girl who was reported missing - 'abducted', she said - by her mother. Using patient and conventional detective methods, he determined that, far from being abducted, Joana had been cruelly murdered by her own mother and her own uncle, and her body heartlessly disposed of. We shall go into more detail about this important case - and how it has been reported in the British press - in a moment.

A. Personal History

First, a summary of what we know about Gonçalo Amaral. He married in his twenties and had a son. He got divorced, then married Sofia Leal, with whom he now lives, together with their two teenage daughters. Here's a summary of his life and career, with approximate dates:

1959 – Born

1980 – Obtains Law Degree and is entitled to call himself Dr Gonçalo Amaral.

1981 – Joins Portuguese Police force. Gradually rises to the position of Criminal Investigation Co-ordinator. Before the case of Joana Cipriano (see below), is best known for bringing drug-dealers to justice - and, according to his wife, has been responsible for more discoveries of illegal drugs than any other Portuguese detective.

1983 – Marries for the first time.

1984 – First daughter, Sofia, born. She now has a law degree.

1995 – Divorced.

1998 – Meets his future wife, Sofia Leal. She already has a daughter, Rita, now aged 12.

2000, June – Marries Sofia Leal. They honeymoon in the Azores, where Mr Amaral hopes to retire.

2003 – Daughter, Inês (Agnes), born.



Sofia Leal and Gonçalo Amaral

2004, 12 September – Mother of Joana Cipriano, from Figueira, reports that her daughter is missing, possibly abducted

2004, October – Becomes senior detective investigating the disappearance of Joana Cipriano.

2004, October – Arrests Leonor Cipriano and João Cipriano on suspicion of murdering Joana Cipriano.

2005 – Shortly before her trial, Leonor Cipriano claims that Gonçalo Amaral and four detectives beat a confession out of her and tortured her (those claims resurface in 2007).



Leonor Cipriano

2005, 11 November - Leonor Cipriano and João Cipriano found guilty by a Lisbon court of murdering Joana and sentenced to jail terms of 19 years 2

months and 20 years and 4 months respectively. The Supreme Court later reduced these to sentences of 16 years apiece.

2007, 3 May – Is appointed to investigate the disappearance of Madeleine McCann.

2007, September – Speaks off the record to a Portuguese journalist who reports Mr Amaral's concerns that the British government has been interfering with his investigation.

2007, 3 October – On his 48th birthday, is told by his seniors that he is being removed from the investigation into the disappearance of Madeleine McCann. After this, according to his wife, "It was a bad time...Even in his sleep he was going over in his mind what had happened to him and how his career was brought to a premature end. I heard him talking in the night because of nightmares..."

2007 – The Public Prosecutor's Official in charge of the criminal investigation against the Ciprianos decides to accuse Gonçalo Amaral and the other four detectives of the beating of Leonor Cipriano, but carefully concealed the fact that in a series of identity parades, she couldn't identify any of her alleged aggressors.

2008 – Resigns from the Portuguese Police force, forfeiting his police career and about one-third of his expected pension as a result

2008, 10 April – A new law, the Policia Judiciara Restructuring Act, passed, after a two-year delay. It provides for the closure of several police departments.

2008, July – Publishes an account of the investigation into Madeleine McCann's disappearance, titled: *A Verdade da Mentira* ('Maddie: The Truth About A Lie').

2009, 9 September – The McCanns are successful in getting a court injunction banning his book: 'The Truth About A Lie' being sold or distributed until further order (see below).

2010, January – Gonçalo Amaral published a new book, *A Mordaca Inglesa* – 'The English Gag', a book claiming that the British government actively interfered with his investigation.

We will look into more detail later in this article about why Mr Amaral resigned from the police force and into what has happened to him since he did so, including the McCanns' libel action against him and the consequent banning of his book. We'll also look at two recent criminal investigations against him and what lay behind them.

B. Gonçalo Amaral's rise to the position of Detective Chief Superintendent

Little is available in English about Gonçalo Amaral's police career. But what we have learnt is that he rose through the ranks to become 'Criminal Investigation Co-ordinator' - equivalent rank to what in the U.K. would be 'Detective Chief Superintendent'. In other words, a senior detective capable of heading up major murder investigations.

We also know that amongst his work, as is common with detectives in most western countries these days, were investigations into the criminal activities of several major drug-dealers. These were often successful investigations resulting in drug dealers being charged and convicted.

Just as in the U.K., major drug dealers often have useful links with those in authority, even inside the police and the judiciary. It was not surprising perhaps, in view of his success in prosecuting drug-dealers, that there may have been those in Portugal wishing to cut Mr Amaral down to size.

C. Gonçalo Amaral's investigation into the disappearance of Joana Cipriano

The full details of Mr Amaral's investigation into the disappearance of Joana Cipriano have been reported elsewhere. Unfortunately, the details of how she was in fact cruelly murdered are exceptionally graphic and we will not repeat them here.

A book has been written about the case by one of the detectives involved, Paulo Pereira Cristóvão, titled *A Estrela de Joana* ('The Star of Joana').



Paulo Cristóvão's book

Another good source is the account by Portuguese blogger Joana Morais, in an article titled: “The smears against Gonçalo Amaral: A Portuguese Citizen Speaks”. You can find it here:

<http://joana-morais.blogspot.com/2008/04/smears-against-gonalo-amaral-portuguese.html>



Joana Cipriano

In court at the trial of Leonor and João Cipriano, Chief Prosecutor Mr José Pinheiro asked for maximum sentences to be imposed on the guilty Ciprianos. He described João Cipriano as “a man who has contempt for human life, psychopathic tendencies and difficulty in controlling impulses”, and Leonor Cipriano as “suffering from emotional instability, insensitivity and disregard for other people’s needs”. Pinheiro added: “The defendants’ guilt is heightened by their cold and calculating behaviour after their child’s death, as well as the devious manoeuvres they adopted to conceal the crime”.

The disappearance of Joana was investigated by three detectives from Faro on the Algarve – Paulo Cristóvão, Marques Bom and Leonel. It’s a case which involved Guilhermino da Encarnação, the Director of the Policia Judiciara in the Algarve, and Gonçalo Amaral, who what in Britain we would call the ‘Senior Investigating Officer’ in the case. Police had a break when they heard João Cipriano tell his sister that they must now tell everyone that a ‘mysterious Spanish man’ took Joana away.

A breakthrough came when João Cipriano, Joana’s uncle, confessed to the murder. He then claimed that he has buried Joana in the Portuguese countryside, but her body was never found.

Piece by piece, Gonçalo Amaral and his team put together the evidence that put two loathsome killers in jail. Their convictions took place less than 18 months before Madeleine McCann was reported missing.

D. Gonçalo Amaral is removed from the Madeleine McCann investigation

Gonçalo Amaral was working in Portimao, near Praia da Luz, when Madeleine McCann was reported missing on 3 May 2007. We will say much more about his investigation elsewhere on our website in due course.

For the British press, it seemed like a triumph when Gonçalo Amaral was removed from the investigation. He wasn’t dismissed from the police, as some newspapers reported. He was merely moved sideways, to a more administrative post and, of course, outside the investigation into Madeleine

McCann's disappearance. His removal took place on his birthday, 3 October. He has told us that his superiors first of all notified Gordon Brown, the British Prime Minister, before telling him.

Typical amongst the British reports was one by the *Daily Mirror*, who reported: "Kate and Gerry McCann hope that bringing in a new police chief will give the hunt for Madeleine a new impetus. A source close to them said they were ready to fly back to Portugal to meet Gonçalo Amaral's replacement if necessary. They believe that the boozy chief inspector, kicked off the case after criticising them and British police, has hindered the hunt for their four-year-old daughter. The source added: "We do hope that the change will re-energise and refocus the hunt for Madeleine".

The Mirror added these details: "Amaral's replacement is expected to be appointed next week. He will be handpicked by Alipio Ribeiro, national director of the Judicial Police, and other senior officers. It emerged last night that Amaral, 48, was sacked by Mr Ribeiro in a fax to his office. The curt message said: 'Transferred to Faro for the efficiency convenience of the service'. Justice minister Alberto Costa last night backed Amaral's removal. He said: 'It is a decision of the PJ national director of which I approve'.

As for the full details of Gonçalo Amaral's investigation, what he has done and what has happened to him since being removed from the investigation, we hope to cover this on The Madeleine Foundation's website in the coming weeks and months.

E. The banning of Gonçalo Amaral's book: 'The Truth About A Lie'

Gonçalo Amaral's book 'The Truth About A Lie' was published in July 2008. Nearly a year later, the McCanns' lawyers filed a libel suit in the Lisbon Court claiming that his book had damaged the search for Madeleine and had caused them immense emotional distress. They demanded 1.2 million euros compensation from him.

On 9 September [9/9/9], there was an interlocutory (interim) application by the McCanns to have Gonçalo Amaral's book banned. It succeeded. This is how Ana Paula Azevedo of 'So'l newspaper reported the decision:

"The 13th Section of the Civil Court of Lisbon has today granted an injunction requested by the McCanns. The injunction prohibits the sale of the book by Gonçalo Amaral, the former Polícia Judiciária inspector who promotes the thesis that the parents were responsible over the disappearance and death of the child.

"His book, 'Maddie - The Truth about a Lie' - cannot be sold as from today, and all copies that are in shops or in storage must be collected.

"The court has further decided to uphold the McCann couple's further demand to prohibit the further distribution of a documentary based on the same book,

which was broadcast earlier this year by TVI [Portuguese TV station].

“The court demands that Valentim de Carvalho and Guerra e Paz [Gonçalo Amaral’s publishers] collect all of the books that are still on sale in bookshops, and further forbids Gonçalo Amaral and the publishers to sell the book or promote the video in any other country.

“The decision also bans other publishers and the media from publishing this or other books or videos that promote Gonçalo Amaral’s thesis. Finally, the Court forbade Gonçalo Amaral from making any statements about the contents of the book or the documentary. The court also decided on a punishment of 1000 euros per day for each day that goes by without the ruling being complied with. This is a provisional ruling and it will have to be confirmed at the full trial”.

There was a further trial of these matters from 12 to 14 January and at the time of publishing this article, a further hearing will take place on 10 February. Even that may not be the end of the matter. We will try to bring you full reports of these hearings in due course.



Gonçalo Amaral attending court on 14 January 2010

Appendix: Joana Morais

Joana Morais, Portuguese blogger, to an anonymous blogger:

"It's not quite as you say, is it? The British press didn't 'embellish' or 'adjust' what they said about Gonçalo Amaral, did they?"

"No, they've hidden the truth and defamed him, spinning only small parts of the Cipriano case. And the reasons that caused the British press to take that stance and maintain a racist editorial guideline is relevant to our understanding of the development of the Madeleine McCann case in the media.

"The abuse by the British press, calling a chief criminal investigator a 'pig' 'fat', 'lazy', 'drunk' etc. was without a doubt an attempt to undermine Amaral's reputation and likewise was an attack on the Portuguese Police. It's not even ethical, in any journalist's code of practice, to repeatedly express such biased opinions – and sometimes even outright lies - thereby manipulating the general British public and setting off a war of words between two countries".

Another quote by Joana Morais:

"I felt desperate at times, not understanding the reasons behind the support given to the McCanns by the British press and the British authorities. I even felt disgusted and embarrassed with Alípio Ribeiro's attack in the media on the PJ officers handling the case. I was similarly disgusted and embarrassed with our Minister of Justice, Alberto Costa, who support of Alípio Ribeiro after Olegário de Sousa and Gonçalo Amaral were removed from the case, for apparently the same exact reasons.

"Worst of all, was when we knew that our Prime Minister José Socrates and Gordon Brown had talked about the Madeleine McCann case. It was obvious then, for most Portuguese people, that Gordon Brown's involvement and pressure in this case would almost undoubtedly mean that the McCanns would never be prosecuted...

"Sometimes I felt like dropping everything and closing my eyes to all the injustice, racism and media attacks - but then I found out that I'm very proud of my small and beautiful country, and even prouder of our people and history; and though by writing a blog and using my real name I'm running a risk, I'll keep on defending my country. Unlike others, who are in the government and in the right positions to do, so but seem to be cowards".

NOTE: Joana Morais's blog is at: **joana-morais.blogspot.com**

She also runs a forum at: **www.themaddiecasefiles.com**

Acknowledgments:

We've used material in compiling this article from a number of sources, including www.mccannfiles.com, Joana Morais' blog, and various newspaper articles. We've also included a number of photographs. We do not believe we are in breach of any copyright. If you have any query about the photographs or material used, please contact us via the 'Contacts' page on our website.

[Article filed for The Madeleine Foundation website by Tony Bennett, 6 February 2010]