

# Protesters opposing police killing attacked in Anaheim, California

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The city of Anaheim in Southern California was rocked by a spate of police violence on Saturday. After fatally shooting an unarmed man, police used “less-lethal” ammunition—including rubber bullets and a police dog—against residents, including children, who were protesting the killing.

The violence began around 4 p.m. when officers began to chase Manuel Diaz for “suspicious activity.” One eyewitness, Crystal Ventura, told the *Orange County Register* that the police shot Diaz first in the lower back, then in the back of the head as he fell to his knees. While Diaz was bleeding on the ground, the police handcuffed him and searched his pockets before sending him to the hospital, where he died three hours later.

“They searched his pockets, and there was a hole in his head, and I saw blood on his face,” Ventura said.

In a press conference on Sunday, Anaheim Police Chief John Welter said that Diaz was seen talking to two individuals in a car, which drove off as police approached. Diaz ran from the police, who pursued and killed him.

Welter confirmed that Diaz was unarmed. Two officers involved in the incident have been placed on paid administrative leave.

Diaz’s sister, Lupe Diaz, said that he was “just hanging out with friends” before he was shot. Diaz’s mother told NBC News, “He was shot first in the back. He was down. Then they shot him the second time. Then they shot him in the head.”

Within a few hours of the shooting, a crowd of neighbors and friends had formed demanding an explanation from the police. Yesenia Rojas, a woman who lived in the neighborhood and knew Diaz, told the *Register*, “We were all waiting for him to come and talk to the community and give us an explanation. Why

kill this man?”

Instead of an explanation, the police decided to disperse the crowd with rubber bullets. According to the *Register*, a police officer said they decided to fire on the crowd because it was “getting too close to officers who were trying to detain a person suspected of being with a group that attempted to throw a bottle or rock at police.”

However, in video footage obtained by the local CBS News affiliate KCAL 9, police can clearly be seen shooting in the direction of women, children and unarmed bystanders. In the course of clearing the crowd a police dog overturned a stroller to attack a seated, unarmed man.

CBS News reported: “Said Susan Lopez, ‘I had my baby with me. My baby! The dog scratched me and then grabbed me.’ She added, ‘They shot at me while I was holding a baby!’ Another woman yelled, ‘They just shot at us, they shot at a little kid, too.’”

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Welter defended the police actions, saying, “Officers in this situation can’t retreat.” He claimed that the dog was released by accident.

Later that night, there were sporadic protests in the area of the police riot, including a brief road blockade with a burning dumpster. Clearly fearing the potential for broader unrest, like the riots in Los Angeles following the Rodney King beating, the police blanketed the area with officers. The police have not yet released information on whether arrests were made overnight.

Anaheim, like much of the Los Angeles metropolitan area, has a long history of police violence. Diaz is the fourth person to be shot and killed by Anaheim police since January. In comparison, there were only five total

homicides reported in the first four months of this year. Police violence is endemic to the area. The neighboring city of Fullerton was where police beat homeless man Kelly Thomas to death a year ago. (See, “Fullerton, California authorities attempt to cover up police murder of innocent homeless man”)

Angry over the brutality, protesters filled the Anaheim police station on Sunday before Chief Welter was to give a press conference on the incident.

The level violence has created a tense situation. The city council announced its intention last month to have an independent investigator review all “major police incidents,” such as police shootings. However, there is no timeline for this investigation and no reason to believe that it will be more effective than any other “independent investigation.” It is intended to cover up, rather than reveal, the circumstances that led to the violence.



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