

Another police killing in St. Louis, Missouri as assault on protesters continues

Niles Williamson
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St. Louis, Missouri police officers shot and killed a 23-year-old man Tuesday afternoon. The killing occurred only four miles east of Ferguson, where the police murder of unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown has sparked popular protests and an orchestrated state crackdown that has placed parts of the city under effective martial law.

Police were called to the corner of Riverview Boulevard and McLaren Avenue after an African-American man allegedly took two energy drinks and some pastries from a corner store. Police Chief Sam Dotson claimed that the young man, who was acting erratically and talking to himself, approached two officers with a knife, and that two officers responded by firing multiple times.

A crowd of several hundred people gathered within an hour of the killing, chanting the slogan of the Ferguson protests, “Hand’s Up, Don’t Shoot.” Residents said that the man was mentally handicapped, and that he had just returned from his mother’s funeral. Witnesses said that as he approached the officers, he was yelling, “Shoot me, kill me now.”

St. Louis Police Chief Sam Dotson dismissed questions as to why police did not use non-lethal force, saying simply, “Officers have a reasonable expectation to go home at the end of their shift.”

The latest killing comes as the police repression against protesters is intensifying in Ferguson. Parts of the city have been placed under police rule. Residents have been arrested for standing still on the side walk or not moving fast enough when crossing the street. Missouri Governor Jay Nixon has declared a “state of emergency” and called out the National Guard.

Despite the nominal lifting of a midnight curfew, anyone who is out past dark will be subject to arrest. Police have set up a designated “approved assembly

zone” on the lot of a former Ford dealership, while media have been cordoned off in another area.

During the day Tuesday, police only allowed people to protest on Florissant Avenue if they did not gather in large groups, did not stand in one place, and remained on the sidewalk. Those without media credentials who stood in one place were threatened with arrest by a large contingent of heavily-armed police in riot gear menacingly stationed at one end of the street.

Missouri State Highway Patrol Captain Ron Johnson warned Ferguson residents to stay in their homes Tuesday night, with anyone out past dark and not in approved zones considered a part of the supposed criminal element. “My hope is the peaceful protesters will stay home and protest during the daytime and stay home at night and let us take those that have been out ruining our community and deal with them in a way that brings calm to this community.”

Under the pretense of protecting the local police force, the Missouri National Guard remained deployed in the parking lot of a local strip mall, which is being used as the police command center and staging area.

Amidst the intensifying crackdown, President Barack Obama is sending Attorney General Holder today to meet with FBI agents, police and members of the St. Louis political establishment. Holder will be discussing how to quell the popular outrage over the death of Michael Brown. On the eve of his trip, Holder penned a letter, published in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, repeating the lies and slanders against the Ferguson protests while cynically promising a full, fair, and independent investigation into Brown’s murder.

Justifying an intensification of the crackdown on protests, Holder claimed that protests are being derailed by “individuals from outside Ferguson” who have been interrupting “legitimate demonstrators.” He called on

the “citizens of Ferguson” to join the police “in condemning the actions of looters, vandals and others seeking to inflame tensions and sow discord.”

He went on to state, “In order to begin the healing process, however, we must first see an end to the acts of violence in the streets of Ferguson.” These comments were not directed at the violence carried out by the militarized police force that has brutalized the population, but the protesters who have been subjected to tear gas, flash-bang grenades, and rubber bullets.

Despite the sensational claims made by Holder and Johnson that “outside agitators” are responsible for unrest, an overwhelming majority of the nearly 80 people arrested Monday night and Tuesday morning were residents of Missouri. Statements by Holder and others that protesters were composed of a so-called “criminal element” and “vandals” were refuted by reports that all but three arrested Monday night were arrested for failing to disperse—that is, for being present on the streets.

Kyle Niere, a resident of Ferguson arrested for supposedly failing to disperse, told NBC News that a group of at least 20 heavily-armed cops pulled him and his friends from their truck as they tried to drive away from the protests early Tuesday morning. “They drug us all out. Face-first to the ground, stepping on the back of our heads. They’re being brutal for no reason. None of us were violent. We were just there.”

Chozen Botley, a protester from the St. Louis suburb of Jennings, said, “There is no outside instigator. Mike Brown is in all of us. He’s with all of us. The brutality that we face as black Americans, you can face the same brutality as a white American. I just want to let the world know that all of the stuff that’s going in Jennings, in Ferguson—there is no outsiders because we are all one.”

As Holder pledged to “defend the right...for the media to cover a story that must be told,” police in St. Louis, with the support of the Obama administration, have been systematically targeting and generally harassing journalists reporting on the protests.

Getty Images photographer Scott Olson was detained and placed in handcuffs Monday for crossing the street too slowly. Monday night the *Intercept’s* Ryan Devereaux and *De Bild’s* Lukas Hermsmeier were both shot in the back with rubber bullets by police officers and then arrested for “refusal to disperse.” They both

spent the night in the St. Louis County Jail with a number of detained protesters and were released early Tuesday morning.

These actions followed the arrest last week of the *Washington Post’s* Wesley Rowley and the *Huffington Post’s* Ryan Reilly.

Police also deliberately fired tear gas at an *Al-Jazeera America* camera crew and then moved in to dismantle their equipment after they fled. In another incident a police officer in the neighboring city of Kinloch grabbed the wrist of *Al-Jazeera America* reporter Aaron Ernst and threatened to injure him, saying, “Don’t resist. I’ll bust your ass. I’ll bust your head right here.”



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