

Twelve-year-old boy killed by police in Cleveland, Ohio

Samuel Davidson
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A 12-year-old boy who was playing with a fake pistol in a playground was shot and killed by police in Cleveland over the weekend.

Tamir E. Rice died early Sunday morning, after being shot in the stomach Saturday afternoon by Cleveland police officers. Tamir had gone to the park with his sister and a friend, and the children were playing with a toy pistol.

A caller to 911 twice told the dispatcher that the gun was “probably fake” and that it didn’t look real. The caller also told 911 that the person with the gun was “probably a juvenile” who was playing on the swings. The caller ended the call by again saying he didn’t think the gun was real.

Police sent to the park claim that they ordered the youth to raise his hands and when he instead reached in his waistband to hand the officers the gun they shot twice, with at least one shot hitting the youth in the stomach. The youth never pointed the gun at the police.

Tamir was taken to a nearby hospital, but his condition continued to decline overnight and he died early Sunday morning.

The two officers involved have been placed on administrative leave but are receiving full pay. Their names have not yet been released, but one is described as a rookie with less than a year’s service and the other as a 10-year veteran of the force. It was the rookie cop who shot and killed Tamir.

As in other such police killings, it is highly unlikely the officers will be charged, let alone convicted of murder. The officers will use the standard excuse that they feared for their lives.

A lawyer for Tamir’s family, describing the family as devastated by the killing, said that they will conduct their own investigation.

While many of the comments posted on the

Cleveland Plain Dealer’s website justify the police shooting on the grounds that the police could not have known for sure that it was a fake gun, more thoughtful comments pointed out that 12-year-olds often play with toy guns and why was it that in America police come into a playground with weapons drawn and willing to gun down a kid?

Another reader asked why, when seeing the age of the boy, the police could not have explained to him that he needed to place the gun on the ground. Another writer pointed out that a 12-year-old might not have known the proper way to respond to police and wouldn’t realize the danger of playing with a toy gun. Others pointed out that since there was only one 911 call, most people in the park must clearly have realized it was a toy.

This is the second police killing of a person holding a fake gun in the past three months in Ohio. On August 5, police shot and killed 22-year-old John Crawford III, who was holding a toy gun he was buying in a Wal-Mart store in the suburbs of Dayton, Ohio. In the Crawford case, no charges have been filed against the police.

The killing of Tamir is only the latest police killing in America. They are taking place on a daily basis in cities and states throughout the country. The endless series of tragedies reflects the state of class relations in the United States. Historically unprecedented inequality brings with it growing fear among the so-called guardians of law and order, who proceed on the basis that anyone is a possible killer.

It is also worth noting that this shooting takes place as every police department around the country has been placed on high alert in anticipation of protests if a grand jury in Missouri does not indict police officer Darren Wilson for the murder of Michael Brown, an

unarmed black youth, this past summer.

A spokesperson for Cleveland's Mayor, in a phone call with Northeast Ohio Media Group, said, "of course everyone is thinking about Ferguson. What's the point of speculating? We're ready to do what we need to in the City of Cleveland."



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