

Philadelphia police shot nearly four hundred people over the past eight years

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On Monday, the US Justice Department's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) released a report revealing that over the past eight years, Philadelphia Police Department officers were involved in 394 shootings, amounting to about one per week.

In Philadelphia, there are often more police shootings in a given year than in New York City, which has five times the number of citizens.

Monday's report is only the latest in a series of Justice Department documents revealing the criminal activities of local police departments, including Albuquerque, Cleveland, Ferguson, and now Philadelphia. In each instance, not a single person has been held criminally accountable for the atrocious crimes revealed in the reports, with each department merely receiving a series of toothless recommendations for reform.

The Justice Department report on Philadelphia found that "In the past seven years, there have been only two months in which there were no Police shootings—June 2007 and August 2010. The most Police shootings in a single month came in May 2013, when the department had 11."

There have been 59 police shootings of unarmed people in the past eight years, 15.4 percent of the total, in the city of roughly 1.5 million inhabitants. In 2010 and 2013, over 20 percent of all Police shootings were against unarmed people.

The report found that while the majority of the victims of police violence were African American, 49 percent of those who were shot while unarmed were white, more than any other ethnicity.

The report noted the prevalence of "Scandals of the past and present, high profile [police shooting] incidents, and a lack of transparency in investigative

outcomes" in the Philadelphia police department.

In total, 540 Philadelphia police officers discharged their firearms in 364 Police shootings between 2007-2013. 20 percent of Police shootings involved two officers or more, and during a 2012 standoff with an armed man, 16 officers fired at the victim. In each of the shooting incidents, "PPD officers fired an average of 6.7 shots, ranging from 1 to 85 total shots."

The epidemic of police shootings in Pennsylvania is by no means confined to Philadelphia. On Tuesday, A Pennsylvania police officer was charged with homicide after she shot an unarmed motorist in the back as he lay face down.

The Justice Department report followed a May 2013 article originally posted on *philly.com* that found the city's rate of police shootings had skyrocketed past other major cities in the US, despite the fact that violent crime had plummeted. At the time, Philadelphia Police Commissioner Charles H. Ramsey contemptuously declared "I think we have a solid policy and consider it best practice."

Ramsey is closely connected to the Obama Administration, and last December was appointed to co-chair the White House's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, whose report, released earlier this year, made no mention of the militarization of local police departments and declined to call for any mandatory changes in police practices.

The release of the Justice Department's report on the Philadelphia Police Department comes amid protests over the exoneration of two unnamed police officers responsible for the brutal killing of 26-year-old Brandon Tate-Brown last December, who was unarmed when police shot him in the back of the head. At last Thursday's town hall meeting where Ramsey and District Attorney Seth Williams

announced the exoneration, the audience erupted in anger, prompting police to arrest ten protesters for “disorderly conduct.”

The report once again reveals the essential class character of the nationwide epidemic police violence. In Philadelphia where the mayor, police chief, district attorney, US attorney and a majority of the police are all black, the city has one of the highest incidences of police violence anywhere in the country.

The root cause of police violence in the United States does not lie fundamentally in racism, but decades of swelling social inequality. During this period, police have become ever more militarized and trained to treat the general population with utter hostility and unrestrained violence.



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