

US cops killed more people this year than in 2014

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At least 1,160 people have been killed by US police in 2015, according to an online aggregator of police killings, exceeding last year's figure of 1,108. The statistics, compiled by killedbypolice.net, show that the wave of police violence has only intensified despite nationwide mass protests by tens of thousands this year against police brutality.

A more detailed database of killings by US police beginning in January 2015 compiled by the *Guardian* newspaper, which broadly corresponds with figures from killedbypolice.net, demonstrates that the epidemic of police violence affects broad layers of the American population from all ethnic backgrounds. While African-Americans were killed at nearly 2.5 times the rate of whites, the total number of white victims of police killings, 537 by the *Guardian*'s figures, was larger than the total number of either black or Hispanic victims.

Eighteen people in the *Guardian*'s database were minors. Two hundred-twelve people, or around one-fifth of all people killed by police in 2015, were unarmed, and 40 were killed while in custody.

According to statistics kept by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, widely acknowledged to radically undercount the real number of police killings, "justifiable homicides" by police officers have reached record highs in recent years, while the number of police officers killed in the line of duty has reached their lowest levels in decades. Thus, while it is impossible to be certain due to the government's refusal to compile accurate data, it is highly likely that police killings for 2015 have been at or above record levels.

On Saturday morning, police in Los Angeles beat and tasered 26-year-old Ruben Herrera to death. Herrera had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Just hours earlier, an off-duty cop in Baltimore shot and killed Edel Cato Moreland for wielding a toy gun. In

Amarillo, Texas on Sunday, police shot and killed Mark Ramirez, a 31-year-old suicidal man, in his own home, in what appears to be yet another police killing during a routine "welfare check."

Also over the weekend, Andrew Thomas, who was shot in the neck last month by a police officer in Paradise, California after wrecking his car, died in a California hospital. Citing the officer's claim that the shooting was "accidental," the district attorney in that case declined to press charges, declaring the shooting "not justified, but also not criminal."

Yesterday the *Guardian* newspaper released surveillance footage and an eyewitness account of the fatal shooting in Chicago last June of 23-year-old Alfontish "Nunu" Cockerham, who police claimed brandished a weapon at them. Video from a private security camera shows Cockerham was unarmed at the time he was shot, and a pistol allegedly belonging to him suddenly appearing on the ground several feet from where he was shot as police closed in.

Also late Monday evening, a grand jury in Texas decided not to return any indictments in the death of Sandra Bland, the 28-year-old black woman and police violence protester found dead in her cell in Waller County, Texas, after being detained for three days following a routine traffic stop. While police claimed that Bland had hanged herself with a plastic trash bag, numerous holes in the police version of events suggest that Bland was the victim of a police lynching, possibly due to her political views.

The ruling in Texas continues the nationwide trend of grand juries refusing to indict police officers in murder cases, which have often been deliberately manipulated by prosecutors in order to let police off the hook.

Only in rare instances, such as when overwhelming video evidence becomes public, have police officers

been charged with any crime. No officer in the most high-profile police killings that occurred in 2015, including those of Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Zachary Hammond, and Sandra Bland, has been convicted.

Officers who were charged and later acquitted this year include Chicago police officer Dante Servin, charged over the 2012 shooting death of Rekia Boyd; Cleveland officer Michael Brelo, who used his “Marine training” in 2012 to unload dozens of rounds at two unarmed motorists at point-blank range; and Chicago police commander Glenn Evans, acquitted last week for an incident in which he jammed a gun down a suspect’s throat. With the mistrial declared last week in the case of William Porter, charged for his role in the Freddie Gray murder, the odds that some or all of the six officers in that case will be acquitted are significantly raised.

The Obama administration has led the drive by the political establishment to shield killer cops from prosecution. The White House has sided with the police in every use of force case to appear before the Supreme Court, and the Justice Department has not brought any charges against officers in numerous civil rights investigations, notably in the killing of Michael Brown last August in Ferguson.

In the case of Laquan McDonald, the Justice Department carried out a sham “investigation” for more than a year while sitting on the incontrovertible proof of police misconduct contained in the police dash-cam video. Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the former Obama White House chief of staff, fought for months against the video’s release on the grounds that it would disrupt this “investigation.”

Meanwhile the White House worked behind the scenes to coordinate the military-style crackdowns on protesters in Ferguson and Baltimore, while Obama took to the mass media to denounce protesters as “thugs.” The flow of military-grade hardware from the federal government to local police departments, including assault rifles and armored vehicles, has expanded considerably under Obama and has continued after the program sparked popular outrage during the protests in Ferguson, Missouri last year.

The ongoing wave of police violence in the United States and the defense of killer cops are the outcome of the continuous strengthening of the repressive apparatus of the state under conditions of ever-growing

inequality and continued mass poverty. Having no solutions to any of the mounting social problems facing the country, the ruling elite turns ever more to the defense of arbitrary state violence as the means to bolster its continued domination over American society.



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