

Police suppress protest at Mall of America over recent police killing in Minneapolis

Matt Rigel, Anthony Bertolt
28 December 2015

On Wednesday, December 23, riot-clad police cracked down on a demonstration of hundreds of protesters at the Mall of America (MOA) called in response to the recent police killing of 24-year-old Jamar Clark.

In less than an hour, police controlled the entrances of the mall and forced the demonstrators out of the shopping area. From there, demonstrators boarded a light rail train to the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport where they continued to protest, causing some traffic and light rail delays.

One hundred police officers were dispatched to the airport to confront some 100 protesters blocking access to one of the airport's terminals. Fifteen protesters were arrested on charges of obstruction of justice or trespassing.

Clark was shot by a Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) officer on November 15 with a single bullet to the head as confirmed by an autopsy report.

Police Chief Janee Harteau claimed that preliminary findings suggest Clark was not handcuffed at the time he was shot. Many witnesses say that Jamar Clark was shot "execution style" while lying on his stomach and handcuffed. Protestors undertook an 18-day occupation of the street in front of the Minneapolis 4th precinct to protest Clark's death and demand the release of video footage of the incident. The occupation ended when police organized a raid on the protest encampment on December 3.

The protests organized at the MOA and airport were a continuation of the efforts to demand a release of the video footage related to the shooting. Other demands raised by the protestors include the appointment of a special prosecutor in the case, rather than having a grand jury decide whether the officers involved in the shooting should be charged, and federal domestic

terrorism charges against four suspected white supremacists who are accused of shooting five protesters at the 4th precinct occupation.

Black Lives Matter issued a call for a demonstration at the MOA. Mall management responded by seeking a restraining order to bar the demonstration and a request that Black Lives Matter issue a statement cancelling it.

While Hennepin County Judge Karen Janisch did not challenge management's contention that the mall is private property, she did not honor the request to ban unidentified protesters from the MOA. However, Janisch did prohibit Black Lives Matter Organizers Miski Noor, Michael McDowell and Kandace Montgomery from mall property.

The crackdown on the protests at the MOA follows last year's legal attack on another protest, where MOA management, with assistance from the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force and the Bloomington Police Department, attempted to intimidate and infiltrate any political opposition to police violence expressed at the MOA.

As a result of the legal attacks last year, 11 protest organizers were charged by the local police department on behalf of the MOA in addition to demanding \$65,000 in restitution. The charges were eventually dropped.

The primary motive to the intervention into the protest organizers' activities was illuminated by discussions between Bloomington City Attorney Sandra Johnson's correspondence with various figures involved, including the police and local politicians.

In Johnson's communications "detering future criminal conduct" were discussed by focusing on "[going] after the organizers, the ringleaders." Additionally, the protests were referred to as "criminal activity" causing damage while "trying to prove a

point,” and they were also referred to as “a powder keg just waiting for a match.”

As Minnesota Democratic Governor Mark Dayton claimed to sympathize with the protesters, he sided with mall management’s position that the facility is private property and opposed the protest, saying it created a “very, very dangerous situation.” Dayton dispatched an additional 30 state troopers to aid police in the crackdown.

Dayton, along with the Democratic Mayor of Minneapolis Betsy Hodges, both oppose the immediate release of the video footage related to the Clark shooting. Dayton said it would jeopardize an ongoing investigation.

The role of government officials in Minnesota follows the pattern of a number of killings, such as that of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, where the state intervened in an effort to protect the police from legal consequences. In Minnesota, these actions are not the product of extreme right-wing politicians, but those of Democratic administrations in both the state and local government which promote identity politics.

The killing of Clark, like other killings throughout the country, has produced a widespread revulsion among working people, but everything is being done to subordinate their anger back behind the Democratic Party.

Black Lives Matter, while leading the protests, has also played a role in channeling the protests back into establishment politics.

Montgomery, who speaks on behalf of Black Lives Matter, saw the mall protest as a way of putting pressure on the government. “When you disrupt their flow of capital... they actually start paying attention... That's the only way that they'll hear us.”

Earlier this month Black Lives Matter organizer McDowell claimed that the occupation in front of the Fourth Precinct that was ended by an early morning police raid had succeeded in improving police-community relationships.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact