Notes on police violence

Minneapolis police chief resigns over police murder of Justine Damond

Anthony Bertolt
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Minneapolis police chief Janeé Harteau stepped down on Friday nearly one week after police officer Mohammed Noor fatally shot Justine (Ruszczyk) Damond after responding to her 911 call reporting a suspected sexual assault.

According to the official account, Noor and his partner Matthew Harrity were driving through the alleyway behind Damond's home in their squad car with the lights off when they were startled by a loud noise. Damond, unarmed and in her pajamas, approached the vehicle soon after.

Noor, sitting in the passenger seat, opened fire with his gun, shooting across Harrity and through the driver's side door striking Damond once in the abdomen. The 40-year-old yoga teacher died at the scene; her death was ruled a homicide.

Noor and Harrity have both been placed on administrative leave pending the conclusion of a state investigation into the bloody incident.

Investigators have determined that no video of the incident exists. While both officers were wearing body cameras, as is required by department policy, neither of the cameras were on at the time of the shooting. Neither is there dash cam video, which was also off at the time.

Harteau, who had been the head of the Minneapolis Police since 2013, said that the killing of Damond was one of the factors that led to her resignation. The police chief had been out of town on vacation at the time of the shooting and did not return to make a statement about Damond's death until Thursday, nearly five days later.

The police chief's resignation followed a request by Democratic mayor Betsy Hodges that she step down.

Hodges told a press conference Friday that she had asked Harteau to resign because "I've lost confidence in the chief's ability to lead us further—and from the many conversations I've had with people around our city, especially this week, it is clear that she has lost the confidence of the people of Minneapolis as well."

At the City Hall meeting, protesters stormed in as Hodges announced Harteau's replacement. A protester shouted during her announcement, "We don't want you as our mayor of Minneapolis anymore." He continued "We ask that you take your staff with you. We don't want you to appoint anyone anymore," followed by chants from the crowd, "Bye-bye, Betsy."

Harteau, the first female, openly gay, Native American police chief in Minneapolis, had overseen the implementation of a number of reforms that it was claimed would moderate police violence, including the requirement that every officer wear a body camera and undertake a program of implicit-bias training.

Assistant Chief Medaria Arradondo is now serving as interim police chief. If approved by a vote of the City Council's Executive Committee, Arradondo would be the first black police chief in Minneapolis. He has been a police officer for nearly three decades.

Last Thursday in the neighborhood where Damond was shot, residents and supporters gathered for a rally and march. The vigil was attended by protesters of various ethnic backgrounds.

During the gathering, Don Damond, Justine's fiancé, and Valerie Castile, the mother of Philando Castile, the African American man who was gunned down during a traffic stop in a suburb of Minneapolis last year, stood side by side and embraced.

So far this year, police have killed 682 people, and the number continues to grow as police in America kill

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approximately three people every day. Police killings are on track this year to match or succeed the nearly 1000 killings in 2016.

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