

Hundreds protest after Minneapolis police fatally shoot 31-year-old man

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Hundreds turned out for a demonstration and a separate vigil on Sunday to express their outrage over the police murder of 31-year-old Thurman Blevins Jr. in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Blevins was shot down by police in an alleyway in a hail of bullets Saturday evening, sparking spontaneous protests in the North Minneapolis neighborhood where the shooting took place.

Just after 5:30 pm Saturday, Minneapolis police officers responded to a 911 call about a man with a gun in a North Minneapolis neighborhood.

According to the official police account, when the officers encountered Blevins armed with a handgun he immediately turned and ran from them. Officers chased him into an alleyway and fired multiple gunshots into him; witnesses recount hearing as many as twelve shots, where he was then pronounced dead. Police say that a handgun was found at the scene.

According to multiple witnesses, however, Blevins was not armed and was shouting, "I don't have a gun!" as he ran from the police. Numerous witnesses say that police arrived to see Blevins sitting on a curb and drinking out of a cup next to a woman, when he immediately turned and ran as officers tried to use a taser on him before cornering him and fatally shooting him. His death has been ruled a homicide.

Minneapolis' African-American police chief Medaria Arradondo appeared at the demonstration Sunday to console family members and protesters, but he was met with demands for answers and that the bodycam footage of the shooting be released to the public.

In an attempt to cover for Arradondo, former Minneapolis NAACP president Nekima Levy-Pounds told the crowd and Arradondo that the protest was not a "personal attack" against him and praised him for coming to the demonstration, asking him to "use his

influence" to get bodycam footage along with the names of the officers involved, which are still being withheld, released to the public.

The police shooting of Blevins comes just under one year after the previous Minneapolis Police Chief Janeé Harteau resigned to be replaced by Arradondo, who was celebrated by local press for being the first Black police chief in Minneapolis. The murder of Blevins explodes the conception that the positioning of an African American at the head of the department would somehow reduce police violence in the city.

Last Saturday's shooting also occurred less than a year after the shooting of Justine Damond, a 40-year-old white Australian-American woman who was killed by police officer Mohamed Noor in July 2017 after she called the police to report a suspected rape in her alleyway.

Nationally, Blevin's death followed the police murder of Antwon Rose Jr., who was fatally shot in the back three times by East Pittsburgh police officer Michael Rosfeld last Tuesday as he fled a traffic stop. A funeral service was held Monday morning for Rose's family and friends. His killing has sparked multiple days and nights of protests throughout the city. More demonstrations are expected today.

Shauny Mary, the woman who filmed the killing and posted it to social media, sparking the protests, told ABC News that the officer had already pulled out his gun and was acting "very harsh" and "very aggressive" before he opened fire at Rose as he sprinted away from the car. "The way he had his gun pointed towards him, he was ready to do something," she said. "He was taking target practice on this young man's back."

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The killings of Rose and Blevins are two more in the

unending wave of police violence. Every day in America, on average, three people are shot and killed by the police, with an annual death toll that routinely tops 1,000. Nearly halfway through 2018, the death toll has already surpassed 500, with this year set to be the deadliest year for police killings since 2015.

The long running police rampage is assuming a new dimension under conditions in which the ruling class is openly and brazenly breaking with democratic norms and moving towards dictatorship and police state rule.

President Donald Trump is overseeing a massive buildup of police state powers in prosecuting the fascistic crackdown on undocumented immigrant workers with the establishment of concentration camps, attacks on basic constitutional principles including due process, tearing apart families and Gestapo-style raids on work places. While these attacks are today directed at immigrants who lack the proper documentation, tomorrow they will be directed at striking workers and political dissidents.

In this context the Trump administration is egging on the police and encouraging violence and brutality. Trump has counseled the police that they should not be “too nice” and should treat detainees “rough.” Meanwhile, the Justice Department under Attorney General Jeff Sessions has pulled back from even the appearance of federal oversight, giving local police agencies the go-ahead to kill and maim with complete impunity.

Following the general pattern of police shootings in America, criminal charges will most likely not be made against the officers who killed Blevins and Rose, and if they are, the officers will not be convicted.



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