Thousands continue to protest in Minneapolis over the brutal police murder of George Floyd

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Protests continued for a second day in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the neighborhood where 46-year-old George Floyd was choked to death by police officers on Monday. Thousands of people gathered at the intersection of 38th Street and Chicago Avenue Wednesday and blocked traffic, demanding justice for Floyd and the arrest of the cops responsible for his murder.

Protests began in the morning Wednesday, with hundreds of demonstrators occupying the block where the brutal killing of Floyd took place and continuing throughout the day and into the night. For the second day in a row police responded with volleys of tear gas, rubber bullets and sandbags as demonstrators moved up Chicago Avenue to surround the Minneapolis Police 3rd Precinct headquarters.

Democratic Minnesota Governor Tim Walz tweeted late Wednesday night that the protests had “evolved into an extremely dangerous situation” and called for everyone to leave the area. An Auto Zone automotive store across the street from the 3rd precinct was set on fire during the chaos of the police crackdown.

Floyd was confronted Monday evening by the police, who were responding to a “forgery in progress” after the owners of a local restaurant called to report that he had tried to pass what they believed was a counterfeit bill.

A video from one of the onlookers’ cell phones shows that Floyd complained that he could not breathe as officer Derek Chauvin pressed his knee into his neck. Another officer, Tou Thao, helped keep the crowd at bay as the two others helped Chauvin pin Floyd on the ground.

As a result of the video going viral online and sparking national outrage, all four of the officers involved in the killing were fired Tuesday by Democratic Mayor Jacob Frey. However, as of Wednesday no arrests had been made.

Private security footage published by the *Washington Post* Wednesday captured some of the events leading to the police killing of George Floyd. The video was provided by Rashad West, the owner of a restaurant near the 38th Street and Chicago Avenue intersection.

The footage refutes the narrative spun by Minneapolis police spokesperson John Elder that Floyd “physically resisted officers” after stepping out of his car. After being handcuffed, Floyd can be seen cooperating with the police and being placed against the wall of the building where the camera is recording, before being dragged in front of the restaurant where Officer Chauvin murdered him by kneeling on his neck for almost 10 minutes.

The two other officers involved in the killing, along with Chauvin and Thao, have been identified as Thomas Lane and J Alexander Kueng.

While Lane and Kueng were relatively new to the police force, starting in 2019 and 2017 respectively, both Chauvin and Thao were veterans with rap sheets. Chauvin, a 19-year-veteran of the Minneapolis police force, was involved with five other officers in the 2006 police killing of 42-year-old Wayne Reyes. In 2008, he shot and wounded Ira Latrell Toles during a domestic assault call.

Thao was sued in 2017 for the use of excessive force after he stopped and searched a man without cause, cuffed him, threw him to the ground and beat him up.

Mayor Frey responded to the protests Tuesday by calling for the arrest of Chauvin but not his accomplices. "I've wrestled with, more than anything else over the last 36 hours, one fundamental question: Why is the man who killed George Floyd not in jail," Frey said. He continued, “I’m calling on Hennepin

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County Attorney Mike Freeman to act on the evidence before him… I'm calling on him to charge the arresting officer in this case."

Along with the demonstrations in Minneapolis, protests over Floyd's killing and against police violence have erupted across the nation, including in Los Angeles, California, where hundreds of protesters blocked traffic on the 101 Freeway Wednesday evening.

The ongoing demonstrations are taking place in the backdrop of a deepening social crisis caused by the American ruling class's negligent response to the COVID-19 pandemic and growing anger over the February murder of Ahmaud Arbery in Brunswick, Georgia and the subsequent law enforcement cover up.

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