

Mass anger erupts throughout the US in protests against police murder of George Floyd

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Update: 6:00 PM Eastern

The document that charges Officer Derek Chauvin with murder in the third degree and manslaughter in the death of George Floyd reveals that Chauvin pinned Floyd's neck to the ground with his knee for nearly nine minutes, including three minutes after Floyd had become unresponsive. During this same period of time, two other police officers, Thomas Lane and J. A. Keung, were helping Chauvin keep Floyd pinned to the ground, one on his back and the other on his leg. A fourth officer, Tou Thoa, was engaged in keeping back bystanders who were pleading for Floyd's life. All four policemen have been fired, but only Chauvin has been arrested.

Update: 2:00 PM Eastern

The police officer who killed George Floyd was taken into custody by investigators, Minnesota Public Safety Commissioner John Harrington announced late Friday morning. Derek Chauvin was fired after video of him pressing his knee into Floyd's neck until Floyd lost consciousness and died was posted on the internet and viewed by millions around the world, touching off disturbances in Minneapolis and other US cities. The three policemen who assisted Chauvin in the killing were also fired, but so far have not been arrested.

Protests and demonstrations have erupted throughout the US in an explosive reaction to the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

In Minneapolis, thousands gathered on the same block where Floyd was killed and marched to the Minneapolis Third Police Precinct building. Multiple fires were burning Thursday, including at the Third Police Precinct, which remains on fire at the time of

writing. The Minnesota National Guard announced late last night that 500 soldiers had been activated and were preparing to deploy.

Also late Thursday night, US President Donald Trump threatened to deploy the military against the demonstrators and shoot protesters. "I can't stand back & watch this happen to a great American city, Minneapolis," Trump tweeted. "Either the very weak Radical Left Mayor, Jacob Frey, get his act together and bring the City under control, or I will send in the National Guard & get the job done right."

Trump called the protesters "THUGS" and said that he "just spoke to [Minnesota] Governor Tim Walz and told him that the Military is with him all the way. Any difficulty and we will assume control but, when the looting starts, the shooting starts."

A black CNN reporter was arrested by police while broadcasting live about 6 a.m. Friday morning. Omar Jimenez and three crew members, all white, were led away in handcuffs. Jimenez was being fully cooperative with police directions, offering to move his reporting location if his crew were in the way, when a group of Minnesota state patrolmen surrounded them.

One of the crew could be heard telling the cops, "You're arresting him live on CNN. We told you before we're with CNN." Another CNN reporter, a block away, who was white, was accosted by police but allowed to continue broadcasting, with the words, "OK, you're good."

Jimenez and his crew were released an hour later without charges, and the Governor Tim Walz of Minnesota apologized to CNN officials for the arrest, admitting that Jimenez "clearly had the right to be there."

Demonstrations were also held in New York City, where 33 protestors were arrested after a scrum with police. Hundreds of people also participated in demonstrations in Columbus, Ohio; Albuquerque, New Mexico; Pensacola, Florida; Louisville, Kentucky; and Los Angeles, California. In Columbus, protestors attempted to break into the Ohio statehouse.

Several hundred gathered in downtown Louisville and marched through the streets to demand the arrest of the cops who killed Breonna Taylor in March. In Denver, Colorado, a protestor was hit by a car that forced its way through the crowd.

Floyd was murdered Monday after being seized by four Minneapolis cops who were responding to an alleged “forgery in progress.” As of Thursday, none of the cops involved in the murder had been arrested or charged.

Floyd repeatedly cried out for help, screaming “I can’t breathe” and “I’m gonna die,” as Derek Chauvin knelt on his neck and Tou Thao helped keep the crowd from interfering.

At a Thursday afternoon press conference, Democratic Mayor Jacob Frey attempted to placate protestors and pleaded with them to “be better than we have been.” Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo joined in the plea to restore order in the city. “I know that there is currently a deficit of hope in our city... But I will not allow anyone to continue to increase that deficit by re-traumatizing those folks in our community,” he said.

Popular anger was further stoked Thursday by the comments of the prosecutor who has jurisdiction over the case, Hennepin County Attorney Mike Freeman. He told reporters that there is “other evidence that does not support a criminal charge... I will not rush to justice.”

Freeman is responsible for the decision to not bring charges against the officer who killed Jamar Clark in 2016, sparking days of protest, as well as the more than half-a-year delay in deciding to charge and arrest the officer who shot and killed Justine Damond in 2017.

The eruption of anger is not only over the killing of George Floyd. This is only the latest in an unending string of killing and brutalization. Every year, the police in the US kill 1,000 people in cities and states throughout the country, whether run by Democrats or Republicans.

To the outrage over police violence is added the

explosive situation created by the response of the ruling class to the coronavirus pandemic. Trillions have been handed out to the rich, while tens of millions of workers are out of work and will not have a job to return to.

The Trump administration is seeking to utilize mass social distress to force a return to work that will lead to a sharp spike in COVID-19 cases and deaths. Already, more than 100,000 people have died from the coronavirus.

From the representatives of the ruling elite, there have been the usual hypocritical statements that follow every horrific police killing. Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden, who was vice president under Barack Obama, declared that the killing of Floyd is “part of an ingrained systemic cycle of injustice that still exists in this country.” The Obama Justice Department repeatedly whitewashed police killings, refusing to bring federal charges against killer cops.

This is combined with the efforts of Democratic Party figures like Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson to frame police violence as a product of racial conflict, as they did in speeches at the Minneapolis protest on Thursday.

There is no doubt that racism was involved the killing of Floyd and other incidents of horrific police violence. The most backward and fascistic layers are deliberately recruited into the police. The Trump administration in particular has encouraged unrestrained police violence with impunity.

However, the police are fundamentally an instrument of class rule. As social tensions reach a breaking point in the United States, the ruling class is turning ever more directly to the mobilization of its apparatus of repression.



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