Protests internationally against police murder of George Floyd

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Thousands of people have protested internationally in a show of solidarity with US protests against the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Floyd, a 46-year-old African-American, died after a policeman pressed his knee on his throat for nine minutes.

Several demonstrations took place in Germany. In the Bavarian capital of Munich, 400 people gathered on Saturday evening, including a march on the city's US Consulate.

Several protests took place in Berlin over the weekend. On Sunday, a protest march through the Kreuzberg district attracted around 1,500 mostly young people. They demonstrated under a banner "Justice for George Floyd" and carried signs with inscriptions including: "I can't breathe," "Justice for George Floyd" and "Being black is not a crime." Shortly before, a "Memorial March against racist police violence in the USA" marched to the Brandenburg Gate.

The largest demonstration took place on Saturday in front of the US Embassy in Berlin. More than 2,000 people expressed their anger at the brutal police violence. Banners included, "Justice for George Floyd!" and "Against Racist Police Violence."

Demonstrators not only protested Floyd's death, but also the conditions in Germany and the growth of far-right forces within the state. Neo-Nazi structures in the police force must be uncovered, said one of the speakers. One participant explained: the denazification that allegedly took place after World War II never really took place. We still have Nazis in various structural areas. Another referred directly to police violence in Germany: it is by no means an isolated incident. It happens almost daily in Germany, she explained, recalling the case of Oury Jalloh, who burned to death in a prison cell in 2005.

On Saturday, up to 5,000 people demonstrated in the Danish capital Copenhagen. Protesters began their protest at the US embassy in Østerbro and finished at Christianborg.

Last Thursday, demonstrators protested outside the US consulate in Milan, Italy. During the day, a mural was painted in the city reading "I Can't Breathe" in reference to Floyd's last words.

In Canada, thousands protested Saturday in Toronto's Christie Pitts Park at the deaths of Floyd and Regis Korchinski-Paquet. Korchinski-Paquet, a 29-year-old black woman died last Wednesday, after falling from her 24th-floor balcony when police officers were called to her home. Korchinski-Paquet's family are seeking to establish the truth about how she died and dispute the police version of events.

Solidarity demonstrations were held in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, where hundreds of Israelis and Palestinians marched Saturday in protest against the killing by Israeli border police of Iyad Halak. Halak, a disabled Palestinian man who had autism was shot in Jerusalem's Old City. Demonstrators held placards reading "Palestinian Lives Matter" and "Justice for Iyad, Justice for George."

In London, thousands gathered in Trafalgar Square on Sunday afternoon, before marching past Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament. They crossed the River Thames to rally outside the US embassy at Nine Elms in the Battersea area. The protestors chanted "No justice, no peace," "Black lives matter" and "Say my name, George Floyd." They carried banners with the slogans "Justice for George Floyd," "Racism has no place" and "I can't breathe."

One protester told Sophie Walsh, European correspondent for Australia's "Nine News," "expect more and bigger protests here, we've had enough."

At 1pm, protesters dropped to their knees in memory of Floyd.

The demonstration stopped traffic on Lambeth Bridge and blocked the road to the US embassy. Many drivers sounded their horns in support as they passed, and onlookers applauded the march.

Showing a recognition of the fundamental and international class issues involved in Floyd's death, some protestors made their way to Grenfell Tower in North Kensington in west London, where 72 people were killed in a horrific fire in 2017 caused by decades of deregulation, neglect and reckless profiteering.

The Metropolitan Police were deployed in large numbers to confront protesters. Walsh tweeted a video noting the police show of force as they cleared the Whitehall area. At the US Embassy, police lined up to prevent protesters going any further. They made several arrests.

Protesters brought placards demanding Justice for Belly. Rail worker Belly Mujinga died last month after being spat on by a man claiming to have coronavirus. Nothing has been done by the authorities, with the British Transport Police deciding not to prosecute the man.

Sunday's protests in London followed a march of several hundred people in Peckham in the south of the capital, on Saturday. A number carried banners including one reading "Solidarity."

Other protests in Britain took place on Sunday in Manchester and Cardiff. In Cardiff, hundreds of people gathered by the walls of the city's castle. One banner read: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice you have chosen the side of the oppressor."

In Manchester, protesters marched through some of the city's main thoroughfares including Market Street, St Ann's Square and Peter Street. The march finished in St Peters Square, where protesters kneeled in tribute to Floyd. This was just yards from the site of the 1819 Peterloo Massacre, where yeomanry and regular cavalry attacked and killed protesting workers. Among their chants were "Justice for George Floyd" and "The UK is not innocent"—referencing deaths in police custody.

Proving this last point, Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab has refused to comment on US President Donald Trump's fascistic response to the protests in America. Trump denounced the protesters as "THUGS" and threatened to send in the military to quash demonstrations. On Friday, he tweeted: "Any difficulty and we will assume control, but when the looting starts, the shooting starts."

Speaking in an interview with *Sky News* Sunday morning, Raab said: "I'm not going to start commenting on the commentary or indeed the press statements that other world leaders make, or indeed the US president."

The British state has its own brutal record of police violence. The London Metropolitan police alone used violence a staggering 41,477 times in a five-month period in 2018. In that period, police fired or aimed Tasers at suspects 2,663 times and trained real firearms on suspects 591 times in London—an average of nearly four times a day.

In the year 2017-2018, 283 people lost their lives following contact with UK police. Of these, 23 occurred in or following police custody, 57 were supposed suicides following custody and 29 related to road traffic incidents. There were four police shootings (three of which were related to terrorism) and 170 unspecified "other" deaths at the hands of the police.

As in the US, this violence falls disproportionately on the black population—particularly young black men—but is rooted fundamentally in the oppression of the entire working class by the capitalist state.

More protests are planned in the UK in the coming week—on June 3, 6 and 7 in London, June 6 in Manchester and June 4 in Birmingham. Similar events are being prepared across Europe.

The rallies are also extending into the Asia-Pacific.

Several hundred gathered in Tokyo, Japan on Saturday to express their support for the US demonstrations. The protesters also condemned a recent unprovoked assault on a 33-year-old worker of Kurdish origin by Tokyo police. Footage of the attack, showing the man being held to the ground by two officers while they brutalised him, went viral and provoked widespread anger.

The demonstrators marched from Shibuya Square, a well-known rallying place, to Shibuya police station. They demanded that the authorities "Turn over the criminal policemen" involved in the attack on the Kurdish worker and chanted other slogans, including "Do not discriminate against foreigners!" Police, in large numbers, sought to break up the protest and arrested at least one activist.

In Australia, thousands of people have indicated on social media that they will attend protests over the coming days in the capital cities including Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. In addition to extending solidarity to the US demonstrations, they will be raising opposition to police killings in Australia, many of which have targeted Aboriginal people.

This morning, Prime Minister Scott Morrison expressed fears that the US protests are resonating among Australian workers and young people. "There's no need to import things happening in other countries here to Australia," he said, adding that "Australia is not the United States."

In New Zealand, rallies will be held in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, beginning this afternoon.