

Trump incites violent police rampage against protesters

Statement of the Political Committee of the Socialist Equality Party (US)
1 June 2020

Across the United States, hundreds of thousands of working people and youth who have turned out in nearly 100 cities to protest the murder of George Floyd have themselves become the target of violent assaults by massively armed squads of police, backed by national guardsmen.

The nationwide violence unleashed against protesters is a continuation and escalation of the murderous assault that cost the life of George Floyd. The police are acting with impunity, fully aware that their violent attacks on protesters are supported by the Trump administration.

It is hardly a coincidence that Floyd's murder occurred in Minneapolis, where President Donald Trump delivered a fascist tirade last October at a rally attended by hundreds of cops. He denounced "far left" and "socialist" politicians, including the city's mayor.

Since protests began last week, Trump has repeatedly called for attacks on protesters. On Sunday, he retweeted a post that called for the use of "overwhelming force against the bad guys," which followed his previous statement that "when the looting starts, the shooting starts." Trump has demanded that state governments deploy the National Guard and has threatened to unleash the military to "take over."

With no factual basis, the Trump administration is now declaring that "far-left" and anarchist groups are responsible for violence. Both Trump and Attorney General William Barr are threatening to declare Antifa—a politically insignificant anarchist group that is, in all likelihood, heavily infiltrated and manipulated by police agents—a "domestic terrorist organization." This constitutionally illegal threat is aimed at criminalizing all working class, left-wing and socialist opposition to the Trump administration.

The rampage by the police over the last several days is among the most violent attacks on democratic rights in the history of the United States. As of Sunday, National Guard soldiers and airmen have been activated to aid in the suppression of protests in 26 states. States of emergency have been declared and curfews implemented in cities and counties across the country, most of which are controlled by Democrats, resulting in the suspension of the right to free speech and assembly.

In the course of the weekend, police beat protesters with truncheons and fired teargas to disperse crowds. A man was shot and killed in Louisville, Kentucky Sunday night, after police and National Guard troops opened fire on a crowd. Rubber bullets, pepper balls, beanbags, tasers and other "non-lethal" munitions

were fired at demonstrators. They also sprayed mace and pepper spray directly into the faces of protesters and journalists. The Associated Press reported that more than 4,100 people have been arrested since Thursday.

One video shot by residents in Minneapolis Saturday night shows police marching behind a National Guard Humvee screaming for people to go inside and yelling "Light 'em up," as they fire rubber bullets on a group of young people gathered outside their home. Members of the New York Police Department rammed their vehicles into a crowd of protesters in Brooklyn. An elderly white man walking with a cane was shoved to the ground by riot police in Salt Lake City as they rolled down the street in armored vehicles dispersing protesters.

In Sacramento, California a young black man who was bleeding profusely after being shot in the eye was carried to safety by a fellow white protester. A young couple was tased and pulled from their car by dozens of riot police in Atlanta after they slashed their tires and broke out the windows.

A young woman in Dallas, Texas who was walking home from the store with groceries was shot in the head with a rubber bullet. Photos show blood streaming down her face. A young child in Seattle was pepper-sprayed in the face, video posted on social media shows her screaming in pain. Those around her douse her face with milk to ease the pain. Police in Las Vegas charged protesters, attacking them apparently at random, arresting dozens, including two photojournalists.

Journalists across the country were clearly targeted for assault and arrest by the police, in direct violation of the First Amendment's protection of a free press. MSNBC anchor Ali Velshi was shot in the leg with a rubber bullet while reporting live in Minneapolis. In Louisville, a local TV reporter and her cameraman were targeted and shot with pepper balls during protests Friday. A freelance photojournalist in Minneapolis was permanently blinded in her left eye after being shot by the police with a rubber bullet.

Lucas Jackson, a Reuters photographer who had been shot by a police rubber bullet Saturday and has covered previous protests in Ferguson and Baltimore, told the news organization that it was clear that journalists are being targeted. "Usually if you get hit by this stuff it's because you are between the police and the protesters—you're taking the risk by being in the middle. During this they are actually aiming at us," Jackson said.

It is highly probable that operatives within the White House have

been directly involved in instigating attacks on the media, which Trump has repeatedly denounced as the “enemy of the people.”

Trump’s deliberate incitement of police violence has been a common theme throughout his administration. In the absence of a mass fascist movement, Trump views the police as a potential power base for a quasi-dictatorial regime. His actions confirm the warning made by the Political Committee of the Socialist Equality Party following his October 2019 speech in Minneapolis:

Trump’s appearances before police, security personnel and military audiences, as well as his carefully staged mass rallies designed to attract politically disoriented and backward elements, are all part of a calculated effort to create a political constituency upon which he can base an authoritarian regime, operating outside all of the traditional legal boundaries of the US Constitution.

The Democratic Party and the corporate media are responding to Trump’s lies and provocations with their typical combination of spinelessness and complicity. They have accepted, without a shred of evidence, Trump’s narrative that the protests are the work of “outside agitators,” a claim made repeatedly at a press conference held by the Minnesota Governor Tim Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey on Saturday morning.

Susan Rice, former National Security Advisor to President Barack Obama, denounced the protests as “right out of the Russian playbook,” claiming absurdly that foreign governments are responsible for stoking domestic dissent.

No Democratic official has denounced Trump’s fascist incitements. Bernie Sanders, the former presidential candidate who is now enthusiastically supporting Joe Biden, sent an email to supporters Sunday evening that said nothing about the police rampage against protesters and did not even mention Trump.

There could be no greater and more dangerous political mistake than to entrust the fight against Trump and political violence and for the defense of democratic rights to the Democratic Party.

What terrifies the Democrats above all is the development of a movement of the working class against the Trump administration and the financial oligarchy that both parties represent.

The multiracial and multiethnic demonstrations that are sweeping the country are a protest not only against police violence, but also against intolerable economic and social conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic is discrediting capitalism. One hundred thousand people have already died in the US as a result of the criminal negligence of the Trump regime and the ruling class. The homicidal back-to-work campaign, supported by Republicans and Democrats, and the Depression-levels of unemployment and desperate social crisis facing tens of millions of people are politically radicalizing millions of working people within the United States and internationally.

The Trump administration recognizes and fears this radicalization and is employing the old red-baiting bogeyman of left-wing violence as a pretext for police state measures.

The entire working class must now come to the defense of all

those protesting the murder of George Floyd and all other victims of police violence.

There is a growing mood of social militancy in the working class. Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, there was a steady growth of strike activity. In recent weeks, workers have organized walkouts against unsafe conditions.

The Socialist Equality Party urges protesters, especially among the youth, to go directly to auto plants, factories, warehouses, distribution centers, building sites--wherever there are large concentrations of workers--and appeal directly for their support. Such appeals will not be ignored.

As the Socialist Equality Party explained in its October 2019 statement:

The fight against the Trump administration must be connected to the fight against social inequality, the destruction of social programs and infrastructure, the attack on jobs and wages, the terrible conditions facing an entire generation of young people, the vicious persecution of immigrant workers, the degradation of the environment, and the consequences of unending and expanding war, which threatens all of humanity. The opposition of workers and youth in the United States must be connected to the eruption of social struggles among workers throughout the world, who share the same interests and confront the same problems.

The working class—upon which the functioning of society depends—has the power to stop the assault on democratic rights, create a massive political movement to drive Trump from power, break the back of the corporate-financial oligarchy and begin the restructuring of economic life on a socialist basis.



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