

Protesters defy Trump's threats, expand nationwide movement against police killings

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3 June 2020

The Trump administration and state governors are continuing to deploy tens of thousands of police and troops against peaceful demonstrations in over 200 cities in the US.

Curfews, mass arrests and police terror have not quelled the powerful movement of youth and workers of all races and ethnicities in response to the May 25 police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. If anything, Trump's fascist tirade from the Rose Garden on Monday, in which he asserted dictatorial powers and threatened to illegally deploy the military to crush the protests, has stiffened the resolve and heightened the anger of the hundreds of thousands marching in cities across the country.

Trump accompanied his repudiation of the US Constitution on Monday with the mobilization of hundreds of military police to spearhead an unprovoked attack on peaceful demonstrators well ahead of the 7:00 pm curfew declared by Washington DC's Democratic mayor, Muriel Bowser.

The demonstrations are expanding internationally. Protests and marches have been held in London, Paris, Berlin, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Dublin, Auckland, Sydney, Tehran, Halifax, Idlib (Syria) and many more cities.

In Houston, over 60,000 joined George Floyd's family in a march against police murder. Drums played as tens of thousands, some on horseback, moved through downtown Houston. The march ended in front of City Hall with protesters holding signs reading, "I Can't Breathe" and "No justice, no peace."

In New York City, beginning at 2:00 p.m., thousands marched across the Manhattan Bridge towards Manhattan in an attempt to meet up with another group of marchers. At the Manhattan end of the bridge, protesters encountered a wall of police, forcing them to remain on the bridge. For two hours, protesters waited for the police

to let them pass before deciding to turn around. Upon reaching the other side, the group came face-to-face with another wall of cops. For two hours the police refused to let anyone off the bridge. As word spread on social media of the cops' thuggish tactics, the police were forced to relent and let the marchers pass.

In southern California, over 20,000 workers and youth braved scorching temperatures to march throughout Los Angeles and Hollywood. These peaceful demonstrations were juxtaposed with the sight of heavily armed National Guard troops and Humvees deployed all along the famous boulevard to safeguard private property.

Demonstrating the widespread opposition to police violence, which takes place in every working-class community, protests have sprung up in rural towns such as Glasgow, Kentucky. This town of 14,000 people in south central Kentucky, in which 86 percent of residents identify as "white," turned out 400 protesters on Tuesday afternoon.

Despite the overwhelmingly peaceful nature of the protests, governors, mayors and local officials have imposed curfews on over 60 million people living in 200 cities in 27 states. This includes a countywide 6:00 pm curfew for Los Angeles and an 8:00 pm curfew in New York City. The entire state of Arizona is under a curfew.

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, a Democrat, imposed an 11:00 pm curfew on Monday which led to over 700 arrests. Not satisfied with this level of police repression, Trump demanded in a tweet that Cuomo "CALL UP THE NATIONAL GUARD" before "lowlifes and losers ... rip the place apart."

Taking Trump's message to heart, in an extraordinary press conference on Tuesday, Cuomo characterized the New York Police Department's response to the protests as a "disgrace." He warned Mayor Bill de Blasio, also a Democrat, that there is an "option ... to displace the mayor ... bring in the National Guard."

In an earlier press conference on Tuesday, de Blasio slammed his fist on the table as he decried “vicious attacks on police officers.” While dozens of social media videos have depicted NYPD thugs bashing, beating, gassing and attempting to run over protesters in the last 96 hours, de Blasio embraced the police and said, “anyone who attacks a police officer attacks all of us.” At the press conference he announced an extension of the curfew through the weekend.

While de Blasio had plenty of words for “violent outsiders,” he did not mention the vicious beating New York police delivered to 32-year-old hospital worker Rayne Valentine after his shift ended Saturday night at Kings County Hospital Center in Brooklyn.

In an interview with the *Daily Beast*, Valentine described walking home from work when he came upon a group of officers chasing a young person. Valentine began to record the encounter as officers swarmed the individual. The police then turned to him, warned him to “get back” and began assaulting him.

The beating forced Valentine to undergo two CT scans and receive 7 staples to close a gaping head wound. Valentine recalled yelling to the officers beating him as he lay on the ground, “I’m just trying to go home.” One of the cops responded, “Well, you picked the wrong time to do that.”

As of this writing, governors in 28 states and the District of Columbia have activated thousands of National Guard soldiers. In addition to the 45,000 Guard troops already activated in the previous months in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 20,400 Guard soldiers have been deployed against the protests, with thousands more on standby.

While the bulk of this force is in Minnesota, nearly 2,000 have been activated in California. Currently, 1,200 soldiers are deployed in Los Angeles, 100 in Long Beach and 530 in Sacramento.

On Tuesday, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, a Democrat, activated 250 Guard troops and deployed them to Chicago. At a press conference, Pritzker assured his ruling class constituents that “We’ll continue to deploy as needed.” Bluntly stating the chief concern of the ruling class, Pritzker promised that “we are doing—and we will do—everything we can to protect private property.”

In Washington DC, soldiers have been deployed around national monuments. Three massive A4 tanker trucks, able to transport 2,500 gallons of fuel, rolled through city streets in preparation for the arrival of the 278th Armored Cavalry Regiment (ACR) out of Tennessee. Ordered to

deploy on Tuesday, the 1,000 soldiers are expected to arrive in the capital by Saturday. ACR units are known as “hunter-killer” units.

From the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan, soldiers from the 278th will be occupying the capitol in Bradley Fighting Vehicles. Featuring explosive reactive armor, a 25mm M242 Bushmaster chain gun, TOW anti-tank missiles and a M240 machine gun, the Bradley’s battlefield purpose is to destroy light armor and scout out enemy tank positions in order to draw them out for the larger M1A1 battle tanks.

There is a glaring contrast between the response of the Trump administration and the ruling class to the deadly COVID-19 pandemic and their response to the mass protests. In the case of COVID-19, nothing was done for weeks as the White House, senators and congressmen sought to downplay the threat, while they prepared a multitrillion-dollar bailout of Wall Street. The malign neglect of the ruling class has resulted in tens of thousands of preventable deaths, with more to come.

In the case of the protests, within hours thousands of police were mobilized and then quickly supplemented by state troopers and the National Guard.

This massive repression against the demonstrations includes the targeting of journalists and photographers. According to data provided by Trevor Timm, executive director of Freedom of the Press Foundation, there have been 211 “press freedom violations,” including over 33 arrests, 148 assaults (118 by police) and 30 instances of equipment or newsroom damage.

In the Philadelphia neighborhood of Fishtown, police still have no answers as to why officers abetted a group of 70 fascist thugs, armed with baseball bats, sledgehammers and axes. The roving band was given free rein to violate curfew in order to harass and beat protesters, including local television producer Jon Ehrens of WHYY.

Ehrens was taken to the hospital Monday evening after he and his girlfriend were attacked by the group for recording them as they assaulted a protester. Even though the police precinct is on the street where the assault happened, and multiple cops were less than a block away, no one has been charged or arrested in connection with the assault.



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