

Thousands protest in London against police killing of George Floyd

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At least 15,000 people protested in London yesterday over the death of George Floyd.

People began to gather at Speakers' Corner in London's Hyde Park at 1 p.m., with many wearing masks, gloves and attempting to social distance. Some of the face masks worn by demonstrators read "I can't breathe," in reference to Floyd's last words as he was suffocated to death by his police killer. As thousands entered the park, traffic soon became blocked on adjacent streets.

Participants chanted "Say his name, George Floyd!" and other slogans included "No justice! No peace! No racist police!" and "The UK is not innocent."

Sky News home affairs editor Jason Farrell wrote of the mood of the march, "It's not the largest, but one of the most passionate marches I've witnessed. There were no mass-produced placards just a multitude of messages on cardboard."

Written on the home-made placards were slogans including "Enough is Enough", "Stop Murdering Us", "Black Lives Matter", "We stand together", "It's Freedom for EVERYBODY or freedom for NOBODY", "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice EVERYWHERE!" and, "Who's policing the police?" Another read, "It's not white vs black. It's everyone vs racism."

Some protesters brought placards demanding "Justice for Belly Mujinga." Mujinga was a black rail worker who was spat on while at work in the capital's Victoria rail station and later contracted, then died of COVID-19. British Transport Police have refused to prosecute the individual involved, despite over half a million people demanding justice in an online petition. Some protesters marched to Victoria Station where they hung a "Justice for Belly Mujinga" sign before joining other protesters assembled in Whitehall outside the

Prime Minister's residence, Downing Street.

The protests were marked by their multi-racial character, with the comments of those attending confirming that what was taking place in the United States was a common experience facing millions across the globe. The *Evening Standard* cited the comments of Gabriella Sanchez, a Spanish national, who said, "This is an international issue. We are here to show that the word justice does mean something."

German Markus Fischer said, "Injustice needs to be fought everywhere."

The march took place just days after footage emerged on twitter of six police officers pinning a black woman to the ground in Lewisham, south London. The attack occurred at around 11 p.m. on May 9. In harrowing scenes mirroring the videos showing Floyd's murder, 28-year-old Kamyimsola Olatunjoye repeatedly yelled, "I can't breathe!"

The demonstration took place at the same time as hundreds protested in the cities of Oxford and Southampton.

These protests followed those held yesterday in Liverpool and Bournemouth. Hundreds gathered outside Liverpool's St George's Hall and in Bournemouth they assembled in the main town square and outside the town hall.

Prior to yesterday's demonstration, chief constables of police forces across the UK released a joint statement saying, "We stand alongside all those across the globe who are appalled and horrified by the way George Floyd lost his life."

The growing anger at police violence was reflected in the comments of Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick, who said on Wednesday that "feelings are running higher in London" and that police would "continue with our tradition of policing using minimum

force necessary.”

This is the same Metropolitan Police responsible for the deaths of 386 people in police custody or following contact with the police since 1990. Several of the placards on the London demonstration, “Remember Smiley Culture” and “Remember Cherry Groce,” referenced some of these deaths.

One of those attending was 20-year old Dilan, who was holding a banner with the name of Mark Duggan. Duggan, a 29-year-old father of four, was shot dead by an armed police unit in London in 2011, which led to rioting in London and throughout the UK. Dilan told the *Guardian*, “This is also about people who are killed in the UK. It is not just the injustice in the US, it is worldwide. ... I do not like the way [Prime Minister] Boris Johnson has reacted. He has not been telling Trump what he is doing is wrong. No one in London is condemning his actions.”

After assembling in Hyde Park, protesters marched through central London—forcing traffic to a halt—with further demonstrations held at Downing Street and Parliament Square. Protesters also went to the US embassy across the Thames in the Battersea area. Police gathered in numbers at the closed gates leading into Downing Street and surrounded the nearby Cenotaph monument. Police assaulted one of the protesters outside Downing Street, leading to scuffles breaking out.

At 6 p.m., several hundred protesters gathered outside Lewisham police station in south London to protest both Floyd’s death and the police brutality against Kamyimsola Olatunjoye.



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