

Mass protests against police violence expand in advance of Juneteenth rallies across the US

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The protests against police violence across the US that began following the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police on Memorial Day continued on Thursday for the 23rd day in a row.

On Thursday, the Louisville, Kentucky courthouse was boarded up and staff members were asked to leave early in advance of an announcement by prosecutors in the case of Breonna Taylor, who was shot eight times by police and died on the floor of her apartment on March 13. A Twitter post by Shaun King, an activist with Real Justice PAC, showed video of the courthouse windows being covered with plywood at 12:32 p.m.

King tweeted, “Multiple staffers said they were all asked to leave the building and that they were told, privately, that a decision was being announced soon on Breonna Taylor. Speculation was that no charges will be filed.”

Forty-five minutes later, King tweeted, “I just spoke to a source in the Kentucky Attorney General’s Office. At 3 p.m. he is going to announce that the Louisville Police did a horrible investigation and gave him an unprofessional/incomplete file.”

However, Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron declined on Thursday afternoon to comment on when the investigation into the death of Taylor would be complete or give any details about the who was being investigated. Speaking at a news conference, Cameron said, “An investigation of this magnitude, when done correctly, requires time and patience. We will do what is right. We will find the truth.”

It has already been more than three months since Breonna Taylor was killed by Louisville Metropolitan Police officers when they battered down her apartment door in the middle of the night to serve a “no-knock” warrant in a drug-related investigation and sprayed her with gunfire. No drugs were found in the apartment,

and Taylor’s boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, was originally being prosecuted for attempted murder because he fired his legally licensed gun at the intruders, striking one of the officers in the leg.

It could not be clearer that both a cover-up and frame-up were under way until protests erupted in Louisville and the case was taken over by the state. While the charges against Walker have been dropped, the three officers have yet to be charged or arrested for Taylor’s murder.

Also, on Thursday, police dismantled an “autonomous zone” set up by hundreds of protesters in the Pearl District of Portland, Oregon the night before. According to a report in the *Oregonian*, police removed makeshift barriers in the early morning hours near Mayor Ted Wheeler’s residence in a neighborhood that protesters had renamed Patrick Kimmons Autonomous Zone, after a man killed by Portland police in 2018.

The autonomous zone—similar to the Capital Hill Autonomous Zone set up by protesters in Seattle on June 8—was declared after the Portland City Council passed a budget on Wednesday which cut \$15 million from the city police bureau. The group behind the autonomous zone was demanding a reduction of \$50 million and the reopening of the investigation into the death of Kimmons.

According to a database of locations maintained by *USA Today*, there have now been protests in 1,670 towns and cities in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the territories of Puerto Rico, Guam, the US Virgin Islands and the Northern Mariana Islands.

The expanding anger and determination shown in the demonstrations in every corner of the US and among people of all ethnic and racial backgrounds is underscored by the fact that the number of locations where protests have taken place has more than doubled

since the first week of June.

Additionally, it is significant that the largest number of protests in any region of the country have taken place in the South (500 locations), with four out of the top ten states with the most protests taking place: Florida (80), Virginia (58), Texas (55) and Georgia (53). California has had by far the most of any state with protests in 169 towns and cities as of June 12.

The ongoing marches, demonstrations, protests and vigils are now merging together with celebrations of Juneteenth, the unofficial holiday that marks the day—June 19, 1865—when Union Army General Gordon Granger read the federal order in the city of Galveston proclaiming all slaves in the state were free.

In Texas, where Juneteenth is officially celebrated as Emancipation Day and also known as Juneteenth Independence Day and Freedom Day, multiple protests are planned in Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Austin and Brownsville.

Hundreds of other Juneteenth protests have already been held or are being held across the US and internationally on Friday and Saturday and are expected to draw large crowds of people who have been engaged in the protests that began on May 26.

The expanding protests have, first of all, been fueled by public outrage over the murder of George Floyd, choked to death by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, which was captured by an eyewitness on smartphone video, shared on Facebook and seen by tens of millions of people. Added to this is the attempted cover up by authorities of the murder of Ahmaud Aubrey in Georgia by three men with connections to law enforcement and the refusal by the justice system to investigate the police murder of Breonna Taylor in Kentucky.

The spreading demonstrations are also a response to the blatant repression and attacks by militarized police units and National Guard detachments that were mobilized against the protesters—especially in major cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Washington DC, Philadelphia, Atlanta and Louisville—in the first ten days of the protests. In the course of the state repression, more than 10,000 people were arrested, 75,000 National Guard soldiers and airmen were mobilized and nearly 80 local governments imposed curfews.

The protests have also expanded because of multiple

new instances of police violence that have been captured on video over the course of the last three weeks. Prominent among these are the police murders of Rayshard Brooks in Atlanta and Hannah Fizer in Missouri and the National Guard shooting death of David McAtee in Louisville.

The predominantly youthful and multiethnic character of the growing protests against police brutality in the US and around the world is an anticipation of a broader and even more powerful movement, giving a glimpse of the revolutionary potential of the entire working class against all forms of inequality under capitalism. To take forward the struggle against police brutality means a fight to mobilize the working class as a whole on the basis of a socialist program for jobs, decent wages and living conditions, and a future free of war, oppression and poverty.



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