

Protests erupt after Detroit, Michigan police shoot and kill 21-year-old man

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11 July 2020

Twenty-year-old Hakim Littleton was shot and killed by police near Detroit, Michigan's northwest side at 12:35 p.m. on Friday. Shortly after the shooting, hundreds of protesters gathered at the spot near San Juan and McNichols where the incident occurred.

Videos shot at the scene showed a large presence of police in riot gear, clashing with demonstrators and throwing tear gas in an effort to disperse the crowd.

Around 300 of the protesters marched to the 12th Precinct police station in Detroit where several organizers were arrested. Protesters chanted "Let them go," threatening to stay until the organizers were released.

Tensions are high in the city after weeks of protests against police brutality in which hundreds have been arrested and police have rammed into protesters with their vehicles. Protests began in Detroit in the days after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota by four police officers on May 25 and have continued nearly every day since then.

Shortly after the shooting Littleton's uncle, Asar Amenra, spoke with WWJ Newsradio, declaring, "Police think they can do whatever the hell they want, and I'm telling you all we can't allow it no more. It's time for self-defense! We have a right to defend our lives, and we should do that."

Detroit Police Chief James Craig held a press conference at 7:30 PM reporting that the victim was armed and fired at police after an altercation with officers. He released video footage of the incident, under obvious pressure from the protesters.

According to Craig, police were investigating a shooting that occurred at a block party near San Juan on July 4th when they encountered Hakim. Officers from the 12th Precinct were arresting Darnel Sylvester, a suspect who surrendered immediately. Hakim was

standing next to the officers as the arrest occurred.

Dash and body camera footage showed Hakim pulling a small caliber pistol from his pocket and firing at the officers at close range. The officers shot Hakim four times as he was turning away and he was pronounced dead at a local hospital. No officers were injured.

During the press conference, Craig cited the thirteen months it took for the Chicago police department to release the bodycam footage of the 2014 police murder of Laquan McDonald, saying the release of body cam footage within hours of the incident by the Detroit police was "unprecedented."

Craig also railed against social media for promoting false information and commended the use of tear gas against the protesters.

However, it is clear the only reason the footage was released so quickly was due to the immediate protests at the scene and at the police district, demanding answers in the killing and accountability. In most cases, bodycam footage is withheld for weeks or months before being shown to the public, if it is released at all, under the guise of protecting the integrity of an ongoing investigation.

The situation remains on a knife's edge with protests continuing across US to demand an end to police brutality and racism. Even in the face of repeated assaults by the police forces and the deployment of the National Guard, multi-racial protests are continuing.

Even with the unprecedented wave of protests there has been no letup in the pace of police killings and assaults. So far this year, according to a database maintained by the *Washington Post*, police have shot and killed 511 people in the United States. Since 2015, 5,442 have fallen victim to the police. For each person killed many hundreds more are victims of non-fatal

shootings, tasing and assaults.



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