

Wisconsin Governor deploys National Guard to Kenosha after protests break out in wake of brutal police shooting

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Protests erupted in Kenosha, Wisconsin Sunday night after a still unidentified Kenosha police officer shot an unarmed African-American father of three, 29-year-old Jacob Blake, in the back seven times at point-blank range. Blake was attempting to enter his vehicle where his children, aged three, five and eight, were seated in the back.

The video, which has been viewed millions of times across multiple social media platforms in less than 24 hours, uncorked a geyser of social anger in Kenosha and across the country as protesters took to the streets in opposition to unending police brutality.

Blake's father confirmed Monday that his son remains in serious condition at the Froedtert Hospital in Milwaukee.

It has been three months since the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police sparked mass multiracial and multiethnic protests, yet despite declarations of "Black Lives Matter" by capitalist politicians, coupled with promises of reform and performative acts of solidarity between kneeling police and protesters, the police, an instrument of class rule, are well on track to exceed 1,000 killings for the sixth year in a row, with the *Washington Post* recording 651 fatal shootings so far this year.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation released a statement within hours of Blake's shooting declaring that the agency will be leading the investigation into the shooting with the aim of providing "a report of the incident to the prosecutor within 30 days," after which the prosecutor will make a determination "about what charges, if any, are appropriate."

Two unidentified Kenosha police officers have been placed on administrative leave, pending the results of the investigation, which will rely on witness statements and

social media video footage.

According to the *Kenosha News*, the city's police department is one of 440 law enforcement agencies that do not use body cameras. The department is not slated to get cameras until 2022 at the earliest and there is no guarantee the department will actually use them properly.

On Sunday night, Democratic Governor Tony Evers released a statement, echoed by Lt. Governor Mandela Barnes during a Monday press conference, which sought to obfuscate the class nature of police violence and present the shooting exclusively in racial terms, blaming "racism in our state and our country."

Democratic presidential candidate and leading architect of the modern US criminal justice system Joe Biden, who earlier this year recommended as a solution to unending police murder that cops "shoot them in the leg instead of the heart," likewise called for a "full and transparent investigation" and for efforts to "dismantle systemic racism."

On Monday, Evers issued an executive order requesting a special session of the legislature to convene on August 31 to take up a series of bills Evers had proposed earlier in the summer that will do nothing to stop the epidemic of police terror. The measures call for a "statewide use-of-force policy," a ban on chokeholds and more "de-escalation" training.

At the same time, Evers announced that he had activated 125 soldiers from the Wisconsin National Guard to be deployed to Kenosha for "guarding infrastructure and making sure our firefighters and others involved are protected." By "others" he was referring to the police, with whom the military will be working closely to suppress and arrest protesters in violation of tonight's curfew.

Tensions in the impoverished deindustrialized city in

southeastern Wisconsin, with an unemployment rate of 9.9 percent, remained at knife's edge throughout the day Monday after an afternoon press conference with Mayor John Antaramian at the city's public safety building devolved into another scene of police brutality. Riot police pepper sprayed the assembled crowd of journalists and community members who were demanding entry to the building before the news conference was declared over.

Later Monday evening, police in riot gear fired tear gas, rubber bullets and pepper balls at protesters who had gathered outside the city's courthouse after an 8 p.m. curfew went into effect. National Guard Humvees were deployed to back up the police.

The events that led up to Sunday's shooting are still clouded, as the authorities seek to dissipate public anger while an official justification is concocted. What is known is that the shooting took place at approximately 5:11 p.m. on the city's north side at 40th St. and 28th Ave. According to state authorities, police were dispatched in response to a "domestic incident." However, it is unclear at this time who exactly called police or why they were interacting with Blake at all.

Witnesses and Blake's attorney, Benjamin Crump, attest that Blake, who works as a security guard, was breaking up a fight between two adult women. Stella London, who lives in the neighborhood with her daughters, thought the incident began over a scratched car and that once the police showed up, they just "assumed" Blake was the problem, she recalled to the *Washington Post*.

La-Ron Franklin, speaking to ABC7, said she witnessed "some girls fighting." Franklin then saw "a gentleman breaking up the fight. When he was turning to get his kids, the officer shot this man seven times."

Blake's fiancée, Laquisha Boone, told ABC7 that Blake was unarmed. "That don't make no sense to treat somebody like that, who is not armed, with the kids in the back screaming," she said.

Following the shooting, a crowd quickly gathered around the officers, who were forced to retreat in the face of hundreds of people as they marched towards the local police station, demanding that the shooter be arrested.

Upon arriving at the police station, a multiracial group of protesters, including women and children, were ordered to disperse and then met with a fusillade of rubber bullets and tear gas. Police attempted to use garbage trucks to block the protesters' path. However, as night fell, the trucks were set ablaze, as angry demonstrators remained

on the streets outside the Kenosha County Public Safety building, filling the night with cries of "No justice, no peace."

Hundreds of protesters continued to remain in the streets, defying the hastily imposed 10:15 p.m. Sunday night curfew. In response, SWAT teams as well as riot police and an urban assault vehicle were deployed in an attempt to enforce the curfew, with police firing tear gas and rubber bullets at marchers well past 1 a.m.

Besides Kenosha, demonstrations against police violence were held in several US cities over the weekend, including Madison, Wisconsin; Louisville, Kentucky; Detroit, Michigan; Portland, Oregon and Lafayette, Louisiana, where 31-year-old Trayford Pellerin was gunned down by Louisiana state police Friday night outside of a Shell gas station. Pellerin, who was black, died after multiple police officers fired 11 rounds at him as he attempted to enter the gas station.

Police were allegedly called to the scene after someone reported a man walking around with a knife in his hands. In a cellphone video, Pellerin can be seen walking towards the gas station as police pursue on foot and in vehicles. As Pellerin reaches for the door, shots are fired from multiple weapons.

Rickasha Montgomery, who filmed the shooting, said she saw police shock Pellerin with a taser before shooting him. As with the shooting of Blake, neither man was facing officers, much less attempting to get physical or violent, yet both were met with deadly force.

As news of the shooting spread, protests were held throughout the weekend and into Monday in Louisiana's fourth largest city. Three protesters were arrested Saturday night after refusing orders to disperse by police who, clad head to toe in riot gear, proceeded to fire tear gas and smoke bombs at marchers. On Sunday, nearly 200 protesters descended on Lafayette City Hall into the evening, chanting, "Back turned, don't shoot!"



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