

“State of Emergency” declared in three states as protests continue over cover-up of Breonna Taylor slaying

Jacob Crosse
26 September 2020

Undeterred by unconstitutional curfews, vehicular assaults, mass arrests, National Guard soldiers and fascist militia—abetted by militarized police departments—thousands of protesters in major US cities continue to demonstrate against police murder and judicial injustice. The latest round of protests was touched off by the refusal of a Kentucky grand jury to bring charges against the police who murdered 26-year-old Breonna Taylor, an African American emergency medical technician, shot in her own Louisville apartment last March.

As of this writing, Democratic governors Kate Brown (Oregon) and Andy Beshear (Kentucky) as well as Republican Governor Mike Parson (Missouri) have declared states of emergency in response to ongoing or planned protests. In Illinois, Democratic Governor J. B. Pritzker and Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot have confirmed that hundreds of National Guard troops remain on standby to respond to any allegations of “violent” protests.

In New York City, five UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters with the Massachusetts National Guard, infamous for their role in ferrying US Army Rangers and special forces soldiers to battlefields around the globe, menaced thousands of protesters in the Bronx and Queens boroughs of New York City Friday evening, hovering and collecting intelligence on protesters.

In anticipation of growing protests in Boston, the Republican governor of Massachusetts, Charlie Baker, called up military helicopters as well as up 1,000 members of the Massachusetts National Guard on Thursday. Soldiers were seen deploying military equipment and erecting barriers on Friday night as over 1,000 protesters gathered in Gourdin Veterans Memorial Park in Roxbury. In addition to community members who have held ongoing protests throughout the summer, Friday’s demonstrations were joined by hundreds of recently returned Boston University college students.

In Oregon, Governor Brown declared a state of emergency

and ordered the deployment of hundreds of Oregon state troopers ahead of a planned rally on Saturday by the fascist Proud Boys. As part of the deployment, Brown waived any restrictions on police use of CS or tear gas. The far-right group was denied a permit by the city, but plans to mass hundreds of fascist sympathizers. The Proud Boys, along with the far-right Patriot Prayer group, have routinely engaged in drive-by attacks on left-wing protesters, shooting paintballs and spraying bear mace in an attempt to provoke violence.

In an interview with the *Washington Post*, Enrique Tarrío, the “international chair of the Proud Boys,” thanked Brown for providing security for his group, saying, “I think it’s great given the fact that Portland has seen over 100 days of nonstop riots.” Tarrío continued, “It looks like the governor is finally getting the message. And it excites me that they’re allowing us to practice our freedom of speech unimpeded by the domestic terrorists we’re coming to protest.”

Tarrío added that “at the end of the day, we support our boys in blue and want to make this event as safe as possible.” Just over a month ago in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the Proud Boys were allowed by police to violently attack protesters and at least one homeless resident.

In Los Angeles on Thursday, two protesters were injured in two separate vehicular assaults. In each case, the driver fled the scene before being briefly detained by police and released. No charges have been announced at the time of this writing. Less than a week ago, Florida Republican Governor Ron DeSantis proposed the “Combating Violence, Disorder and Looting and Law Enforcement Protection Act,” which included a “prohibition on obstructing roadways.” The proposed law states that a “driver is NOT liable for injury or death caused if fleeing for safety from a mob.”

Despite ongoing state violence and hit-and-run attacks, protests and marches have continued for the third night in a row, with more scheduled throughout the weekend following Wednesday’s announcement by Kentucky’s Republican

Attorney General Daniel Cameron, who is African American, that no charges would be brought against two Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD) cops, Myles Cosgrove and Jon Mattingly, responsible for the murder of Breonna Taylor on March 13.

The protests against the blatant hypocrisy and injustice perpetrated by the state against working class victims of police violence show no signs of receding, despite the best efforts of the Democratic and Republican parties to snuff them out through police repression. At the same time, the Democrats seek to obscure the class role of the police as armed state agents of the capitalist class and prevent a united movement of the working class by blaming police murders on “white racism” rather than on capitalism.

While it is true that the police recruit and foster racist, chauvinist and reactionary elements, their essential purpose is not to enforce a racial code, but to protect and defend the interests of capital against the working class, regardless of skin color. Recent examples of police violence against non-African Americans include Hannah Fizer, Jared Lakey, Andres Guardado and 13-year old Linden Cameron.

It is not a coincidence that neither Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden nor his running mate, former “top cop” of California Kamala Harris, who made her career by jailing working class youth and expanding the use of state prisoners as virtual slave labor, have made note of any of these heinous assaults and killings of non-African Americans. That is because these cases cut across their racialist interpretation of police violence.

During Thursday night's protests in Louisville, over 100 protesters were menaced by local police and at least one *agent provocateur* after the police declared an “unlawful assembly” prior to the 9 p.m. curfew. Protesters sought sanctuary from riot cops and their fascist Oath Keeper militia allies at the First Unitarian Church, which is exempt from the curfew imposed by Democratic Mayor Greg Fischer.

Despite the fact that the protesters were granted refuge by the pastor, police maintained a perimeter around the group for over two hours. Sheri Wright, an independent journalist based in Louisville, in an interview with the Associated Press, commented on the forces arrayed against the multiracial and nonviolent group of young people.

She wrote: “I’m tired, I’m in fear for my life, especially last night. Right now, we’re sitting here. Not only from LMPD (Louisville Metro Police Department) and all other law enforcement authorities that have been brought in, but there are lots of white supremacists.” Wright noted the abuse from police she has personally suffered. “I’ve been shot at, as a member of the independent press, I’ve been shot at by pepper balls.”

While surrounded by the police, protesters noticed a white man who approached a section of the group and, according to protester Eliza Thompson, who spoke with the *Washington Post*, began badgering them with strange questions.

The newspaper reported: “Thompson said the man kept asking them, ‘Why are you here? Where are we? Why are y’all march?’ and also, ‘Who’s Breonna Taylor?’”

The unidentified man then pulled out a pair of brass knuckles and attempted to start a fight with members of the group. “I think he was trying to instigate something so the police could come into the sanctuary and start arresting people,” Thompson said. “They just need a reason to come in. If we fought, they would roll in heavy.”

After protesters surrounded the man and drove him out of the parking lot, he continued to linger, well after curfew, and even spoke to another reporter. He claimed to be a nurse who lived nearby. “I’m friendly” and “on the left,” the unidentified man said, before leaving shortly thereafter, walking through a line of riot police, unmolested.

On Friday at Jefferson Square Park in Louisville, the Taylor family and their attorney, Benjamin Crump, held their first press conference since the Kentucky grand jury decision was announced by Cameron.

Crump denounced the whitewash and demanded that the transcript of the secret grand jury proceedings be released. “Breonna Taylor's entire family is heartbroken,” he said, “and confused and bewildered, just like all of us, as to what did Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron present to the grand jury.”

Crump then urged the family and supporters to place their hopes for justice in the hands of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, with Crump tweeting: “I hope the FBI investigation finally gets justice for Bre and her family.”

Tamika Palmer, Breonna’s mother, offered a much more sober appraisal of the role of the police and the bourgeois courts, writing in a letter that was read aloud during the press conference: “I was reassured Wednesday of why I have no faith in the legal system, in the police, in the law...”

Speaking of Cameron’s decision not to bring charges against either Cosgrove or Mattingly, Palmer wrote, “He [Cameron] helped me realize that it will always be us against them—that we are never safe when it comes to them.”



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact