

Wisconsin police conduct mass arrest of protesters, journalists after announcement of no charges against killer cop

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Police in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee, arrested 24 people during protests Thursday night, including journalists and the family members of Alvin Cole, a 17-year-old African American youth who was shot and killed by Wauwatosa police officer Joseph Mensah, who is also black, on February 2 this year.

The protests marked the second night in a row in which demonstrations were held in response to Milwaukee County District Attorney John Chisholm's announcement on Wednesday that no charges would be forthcoming against Mensah, who is currently suspended without pay from the department.

Similar to protests held around the country throughout the spring and summer following the police murders of Breonna Taylor in Louisville, Kentucky; George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota and the shooting of Jacob Blake in Kenosha, which is roughly an hour to the south of Wauwatosa, the overwhelmingly peaceful protesters have been met with brutal police repression, including tear gas, baton strikes and "less-lethal" impact munitions.

Police have continued to target those trying to document the protests and police brutality in general. In startling video, heavily armed police backed up by National Guard soldiers and Humvees, deployed on the orders of Democratic governor Tony Evers, ripped journalists from their vehicles and slammed them on the ground, even as they were displaying their credentials.

Among those arrested were Shelby Talcott, 27 and Richie McGinniss, 31, both employed by the right-wing news outlet Daily Caller. In an interview with Fox News, Talcott described the arrests as an example of

"excessive force."

"Nobody was resisting," Talcott said. "When police told us to do something, we complied." Arrested with Talcott was independent video journalist Brendan Gutenschwager. After he was released from the Waukesha County Jail, Gutenschwager confirmed on Twitter that he was "brutalized by police."

Gutenschwager wrote that he "pleaded with officers that I am here as press, [I was] never given a chance to cooperate before they escalated to this. I am in shock." Gutenschwager also posted a letter he said he wrote while jailed in which he describes being threatened with a Taser, dragged on the ground and zip-tied, then thrown into a paddy wagon with a mix of protesters and journalists, including Talcott and McGinniss.

Mensah has killed three people within the last five years, including Cole, Jay Anderson, Jr. in 2016 and Antonio Gonzales in 2015. In every single instance, Chisholm, a Democrat, has ruled the actions of Mensah, "justified."

In Cole's case, Mensah claimed he "feared for his life" when he saw the teen in possession of a handgun. Mensah shot and killed Cole within 30 seconds of seeing him, but the weapon Cole was holding was inoperable when Mensah shot him.

Leading up to the shooting, Cole had been fleeing from police. As he was running a discharge occurred, jamming the weapon and resulting in Cole actually shooting himself in the arm. While no body camera footage of the incident exists, police allege that Mensah shot the injured Alvin while he was on the ground with the weapon still in his hand.

In addition to journalists, four family members from the Cole family were also arrested on Thursday,

including Tracy Cole, the mother of Alvin, and his three sisters, Tristiana, Taleavia and Tahudah. Tahudah streamed on Facebook Live the moment police arrested her and her mother for “breaking curfew.”

On the video, which was left recording in her vehicle, police demand Tracy exit the car, stating they are under arrest. Tahudah asks, “what are we getting arrested for?” One officer tells her to relax while other voices are heard telling them to get out. Off camera, Tracy can be heard screaming, “I’m Alvin Cole’s mother,” “don’t touch me” and “I can’t breathe.” An officer can be heard threatening to electrocute Tracy, “Get on the ground, you’re going to get Tased.”

After being arrested and handcuffed on the ground, Tracy informed an officer that her head is bleeding. A cop responded, “well, that’s too bad.”

A 7:00 p.m. through 6:00 a.m. curfew was declared by Wauwatosa’s Democratic mayor Dennis McBride after Chisholm’s announcement on Wednesday and remains in effect through Monday. On Thursday, roughly 100 protesters marched on foot while a car caravan of several dozen supporters joined them, including the Cole family and Jacob Blake, Sr., the father of Jacob Blake, who was shot seven times in the back by Kenosha Police on August 23.

Once the curfew went into effect, police began grabbing peaceful protesters and disappearing them in unmarked vehicles or throwing them in police transports. Those who were participating in the car caravan, such as the Cole family, were ripped from their vehicles and then arrested.

This “de-escalation tactic” as President Donald Trump’s Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, Chad Wolf described it in testimony before Congress this summer—reminiscent of South and Central American US-backed dictatorships—has been imported to the “homeland” to oppress and silence those who dare question, or record, the murderous activities of the police. Neither Joe Biden, nor his running mate, Kamala Harris, has protested the use of the targeted kidnappings by US police in cities across the country but have repeatedly made clear their full support for the police.

The decision on the part of Chisholm not to prosecute Mensah follows similar determinations reached by Republican Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron, who is African American, and Missouri

special prosecutor Stephen Sokoloff, who is white and a Democrat, to not charge any of the officers involved in the murders of Breonna Taylor and Hannah Fizer, respectively. Despite the various races of those involved, the fact is in each instance the police claimed “self-defense” and were protected by district attorneys from both capitalist parties.

Overall, roughly 1,000 people a year are killed by police in the United States. Minorities, particularly African Americans and Native Americans and those suffering from mental illness or autism, such as Cameron Linden, are disproportionately targeted and killed by armed agents of the state, but the police function as an instrument of class rule, not enforcers of a racial code.

Despite decades of promises by politicians claiming to institute “reform” and “accountability” within police departments, including adding more minorities and women to the ranks, police continue to kill multiple times every day. Calls for prosecuting the police, who are virtually immune from prosecution in cases where they claim “self-defense” or “perceive a threat,” will continue to go unanswered by the state.

In fact, within the last 50 years only four cops in Milwaukee and its immediate suburbs have been charged in police-related shootings, with only one conviction—21 years after the murder took place. The last two cases in which Chisholm charged officers with a crime ended in an acquittal and a mistrial.

The question of ending state violence is not a matter of electing the “right” candidate or “defunding the police.” This will not happen as long as the system the police are charged to defend, the capitalist system, exists. This is why the Socialist Equality Party calls on all those who want to end police violence to make a class conscious decision to join our party and fight for the establishment of socialism.



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