Post-election protests in US cities met with mass arrests

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Protests demanding that every outstanding vote in the presidential election be counted have sprung up in major US cities, including New York City, Portland, Chicago, Denver, Minneapolis and Seattle. The demonstrations followed the conclusion of Tuesday's vote and President Donald Trump's false declarations that he already won the election before millions of mail-in and absentee ballots had yet to be counted.

As of this writing, Trump remains behind in several key states including Nevada and Arizona. If former vice president Joe Biden maintains his slim lead in those states after winning Wisconsin and Michigan on Wednesday, he would reach the 270 electoral vote threshhold.

As part of Trump's dictatorial strategy to remain in power, despite seemingly losing the electoral college vote and the popular vote by nearly four million, Trump has repeatedly, without evidence, claimed "voter fraud" and demanded through Twitter that states stop counting ballots as Republican lawyers file pseudo-legal challenges in tightly contested states. Trump is also inciting his fascistic followers to intimidate poll workers and demand an end to vote counting.

Republican operatives on social media and through email lists have sent out repeated calls for "poll challengers" to mass at counting sites. As part of this effort to subvert the democratic rights of millions of people, right wing elements have continued to harass poll workers outside of counting sites.

In Detroit, Michigan, roughly 100 pro-Trump/Republican protesters attempted to break into a vote counting location while demanding election counters "stop the vote." At the Maricopa County election office in Arizona, hundreds of Trump supporters, some armed with long rifles, threatened election workers while chanting the opposite slogan,

"count that vote." Kim Powell, a local news reporter, was forced to leave the Maricopa counting site after a protester threatened her and demanded to know where she lived.

Despite the threatening character of the pro-Trump protests, no arrests were made and it doesn't appear that police utilized tear gas or rubber bullets against either of the unruly mobs.

This stands in stark contrast to the dozens of protests that sprang up in response to Trump's coup maneuvers and self-serving demands to end the vote counting in states where he is ahead and demand that it continue in states where he is trailing.

In Portland, Oregon, a convoy of Humvees carrying roughly 50 National Guard soldiers, activated on the orders of Democratic governor Kate Brown, joined police officers with batons on the "riot line" to beat back protesters after a "riot" was declared shortly after 7 p.m. Brown blamed "self-styled anarchist protesters" for damaging downtown businesses. Several different groups had gathered to protest including some in support of Black Lives Matter, while others were protesting police violence as well as Biden and Trump.

In a statement Thursday, Brown said the deployment of the Guard was done in order to protect "free speech" and "keep the peace." Brown did not say how long the soldiers would be deployed to Portland, the first time National Guard soldiers have been on the city's streets since a Vietnam war protest held in 1970.

Portland police claimed to have arrested 11 at the protests. One of those arrested was carrying an M-4 style assault rifle which had a sticker affixed to it which read, "dead tyrant society," indicative of involvement in the fascist boogaloo boy movement.

In Minneapolis, Minnesota, five months after the police murder of George Floyd touched off a summer

of protests against police violence, nearly 700 people partook in a protest defending the democratic right to vote. Protesters chanted, "Don't let Trump steal the election" and "Trump, Biden, No retreat, Keep your ass out in the street!" After the march moved onto Interstate 94, police surrounded protesters and prevented them from leaving the freeway, issuing over 600 citations for "unlawful assembly," even though police never declared the assembly illegal before they began issuing tickets.

In Boston, Massachusetts, a few hundred protesters affiliated with Democratic Party-aligned organizations such as the Democratic Socialist of America and the Sunrise Movement protested against Trump's claims of victory while demanding minimal social reforms from the stairs of the Boston Public Library.

In New York City, 57 people were arrested during a police riot that took place in Manhattan Wednesday night. After hundreds of protesters had marched peacefully through the West Village at around 8:30 p.m., police began to move against the march, snatching protesters, leading to confrontations and mass arrests. Throughout the night, helicopters swirled overhead as police, who outnumbered protesters, sought to "kettle" demonstrators before beating and arresting them.

"The police are occupying our street, they are blocking my way back to peacefully go to my dorm, there is no way for me to get back, the police are inciting violence," Bohan Ma, a New York University freshman, told a reporter for *Gothamist*. Social media videos show police giving contradictory commands, such as ordering protesters onto the sidewalk before arresting them for "failing to disperse."

One of those arrested was Devina Singh, a 24-year-old former bartender who lost her job due to the pandemic. Video of her arrest was amplified by the official Twitter account of the New York Police Department as an example of actions that, "will not be tolerated." Speaking to the *Gothamist*, Singh said she was walking on Seventh Avenue when a cop with the Strategic Response Group rammed into her with his bike, sending her to the ground.

Singh responded to the provocation by cursing and spitting at the cop, who responded by throwing her to the ground, breaking her arm, and arresting her. "He pulled me over the bike line head first. My feet were in the air, I was stuck on the bikes," Singh recalled. "I stand by calling them fascists. It was a peaceful protest until [NYPD] people showed up," she said.

In Seattle, seven people were arrested during Wednesday night's protest which took place on Capitol Hill. Protesters carried signs reading, "Stop Trump's racist voter suppression," "Black Lives Matter," and "Don't steal the election."

In Chicago, hundreds gathered downtown Wednesday night with banners reading "Count Every Vote!" and "Out Now!" as they marched down Michigan Avenue. The Democratic Party-led march lasted a few hours before dispersing without any arrests made.

In Denver, nearly 200 anti-fascist protesters marched on the state Capitol building demanding Trump leave, before police declared the demonstration an "unlawful assembly" and began firing on protesters, who carried signs reading, "Death to fascism and the liberalism that enables it." As in other cities police often instigated and escalated incidents between protesters and demonstrators. In one social media video police are seen targeting protesters in the head with "less-lethal" rubber bullet rounds as they walked away from the march. It is unknown how many were injured, but police claim eight were arrested.

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