

# Democratic mayor of Portland, Oregon urges residents to report “Antifa” protesters to the police

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Over the weekend in Portland, Oregon, Democratic Mayor Ted Wheeler issued a series of right-wing measures and statements encouraging residents to report anyone who they suspect could be affiliated with “Antifa” to help the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) crack down on left-wing protests.

“They want to burn, they want to bash, they want to intimidate, they want to assault,” Wheeler stated on Friday, following his extension of the state of emergency order declared earlier last week before the guilty verdict in the trial of Derek Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd. “Together we can make a stand,” Wheeler declared, “and take our city back.”

The mayor encouraged city residents to share any information about “rioters” to the police, record “acts of vandalism,” take down license plate numbers and report groups of individuals who are “all dressed in all black.”

“Our job is to unmask them, arrest them and prosecute them,” Wheeler exclaimed. “I want to personally thank neighbors, family and friends who have come forward with vital evidence. People know who these criminals are.” In an attempt to provide this anti-democratic order with some semblance of a liberal facade, he tried to leverage the inter-organizational conflicts that emerged last summer when official Black Lives Matter activists denounced the tactics of anarchistic elements: “If BLM leaders can show the courage to stand up to this mob, then we all should.”

In the midst of a global pandemic that has reached record-breaking rates of infection and continues to kill over 700 people a day in the US, Wheeler also denounced protesters for preventing the full reopening of the city’s economy: “Our community needs to

resume their lives. People need to go back to work. Employers need to be able to reopen.”

The mayor’s recent comments seized upon scattered instances of minor property damage during limited protests over the past week. Demonstrations began on April 12, following the latest string of police killings, including Daunte Wright in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, Adam Toledo in Chicago, Illinois and Ma’Khia Bryant in Columbus, Ohio. Popular outrage was further stoked by the Portland police murder of Robert Delgado on April 16. Delgado, who was white, appeared to be suffering a mental health crisis when he was killed by the police in a public park.

The protests continued until Friday at 9 p.m., when the Portland Police Bureau declared the protest of a mere 75 individuals to be a riot. None of the demonstrations involved more than 100 protesters. Two protesters were arrested on Tuesday, and two more were arrested Friday. The violence of the police was on full display. A police officer repeatedly punched one protester in the head during Tuesday’s protest.

A small minority of protesters damaged property. Some spray paint was daubed on property between Tuesday and Friday. Property at the Portland Boys and Girls Club was damaged on Tuesday, and a fire was started at the Portland Police Association building. Windows were broken at a downtown Starbucks on Friday.

These isolated acts of petty crimes, emerging from a swell of anger and opposition against unending police violence and inequality, are being seized upon as a pretext to label all left-wing protesters as violent criminals and build up the repressive powers of the police. While starting with small groups of young

anarchistic protesters, Wheeler is driven by deeper motivations to prepare the state for the repression of mass social unrest and renewed class struggle.

Wheeler viciously attacked the democratic right to publicly assemble in his statement, declaring, “I support our police using all legal strategies, including kettling, when the appropriate circumstances and resources are available to do so without putting officers at risk of physical harm.” This comes after The Oregon Justice Resource Center, the Council on American-Islamic Relations of Oregon and the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon all condemned the police’s actions during protests last month as illegal, especially the use of kettling.

Extraordinary resources are being implemented to carry out Wheeler’s demand to “unmask them, arrest them, and prosecute them [protesters].” This includes the use of the FBI and police to infiltrate anti-police violence protests. A plainclothes officer or FBI agent singled out 19-year-old Alma Raven-Guido to be arrested on April 13. There can be no doubt that provocateurs are being utilized by the police in an effort to discredit the protests.

Wheeler’s latest statements have been received favorably by right-wing media outlets like the *New York Post*, far-right figures in the Portland region, such as “independent” journalist Andy Ngo and Trump supporters. Wheeler’s comments are indistinguishable from Trump’s tirades against “radical left extremists” in 2020, in which the former President sought to label the amorphous body of “Antifa” protesters a “major organization of terror.”

During the demonstrations last year in the aftermath of the police murder of George Floyd, Wheeler had tried to present himself as sympathetic to protesters. The mayor protested against the Trump administration’s deployment of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in Portland, which had thrown numerous protesters into unmarked vans. However, after the election and inauguration of President Joe Biden, DHS forces were deployed against protesters in early March without any objection.

The effort to suppress the growth of left-wing opposition, in whatever form it assumes, through the attack on democratic rights is the bipartisan policy of the ruling class. Wheeler’s latest law and order proclamation came after the enactment of Florida’s

“anti-riot bill,” which was signed into law by Republican governor Ron DeSantis on April 19. DeSantis described the bill as “the strongest anti-rioting, pro-law enforcement piece of legislation in the country.” The anti-democratic bill has been described by Kara Gross, legislative director at ACLU Florida, as “so overbroad and vague...that it captures anybody who is peacefully protesting at a protest that turns violent through no fault of their own.”



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