

Derek Chauvin sentenced to 22.5 years for the murder of George Floyd

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Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who killed George Floyd on May 25, 2020, was sentenced on Friday to 22-and-a-half years in prison.

Chauvin—who was captured on smartphone video kneeling on Floyd’s neck for more than 9 minutes until he was asphyxiated—wore a medical facemask in court and looked to his left as Hennepin County Court Judge Peter A. Cahill read out the sentence. Chauvin was immediately led out of the courtroom and back to jail after the conclusion of the procedure.

The sentence was greater than the minimum 12 and-a-half years required by the state’s guidelines for the crimes Chauvin had been convicted of on April 20. In his 22-page “Sentencing Order and Memorandum Opinion,” Judge Cahill wrote, “270 months, which amounts to an additional ten years over the presumptive 150-month sentence, is appropriate.”

The judge also wrote that Chauvin “must be held accountable for the death of Mr. Floyd and for doing so in a manner that was particularly cruel and an abuse of his authority.” While the sentence was less than the thirty years requested by the prosecution, it is the longest sentence ever handed down in a Minnesota case involving murder by a police officer.

According to legal experts, Chauvin could get out of prison on parole after serving two-thirds of his sentence or approximately 15 years. Ben Crump, attorney for the Floyd family, said the family had gotten “some measure of accountability” from the verdict but is hoping Chauvin gets the maximum sentence at his upcoming federal civil rights trial.

Ahead of the sentencing announcement, Chauvin spoke briefly saying he could not give a full formal statement due to “additional legal matters at hand” and then, turning to the Floyd family, said, “There’s going to be some other information in the future that would

be of interest, and I hope things will give you some peace of mind,” although he did not explain what he meant by this comment.

Speaking outside the courtroom, Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, whose office prosecuted the case against Chauvin said, “Today’s sentencing is not justice, but it is another moment of real accountability on the road to justice.” However, the number of police murders in the US so far—431 deaths through June 21 as reported by the *Washington Post*—is on track to reach 1,000 people this year, the same number killed every year since 2015.

Family members of George Floyd had asked Judge Cahill prior to his announcement to impose the maximum possible sentence of 40 years for the public murder of their loved one. Floyd’s brother Rodney said the sentence was a slap on the wrist and that the family “suffered a life sentence for not having him in our life, and that hurts me to death.” Floyd’s nephew Brandon Williams, said the punishment was insufficient, “when you think about George being murdered, in cold blood with a knee on his neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds execution-style in broad daylight.”

The day began with Chauvin’s defense attorney Eric Nelson requesting a new trial on the grounds of jury misconduct and judicial errors. Nelson argued that public statements after the trial by juror Brandon Mitchell—who explained why the video of Floyd’s killing made Chauvin’s conviction a clear choice—were grounds for at least a special hearing and that the judge should have granted a change of venue, among other issues. However, Cahill denied the motions and moved to the sentencing announcement in the afternoon.

The horrific video of the murder of George Floyd by Chauvin—captured and uploaded to social media on Memorial Day 2020 by 17-year-old Darnella

Frazier—has been viewed online 1.4 billion times. The video of Floyd—a 46-year-old black man—pleading for his life and calling out for his mother while white police officer Chauvin remained on his neck in cold-blooded indifference, sparked a multiethnic mass movement across the US and internationally against racial discrimination and police violence involving tens of millions of people.

Since his conviction, Chauvin has been held at the maximum security prison in Oak Park Heights, Minnesota, in a cell by himself for his own protection and with his meals brought to him.

In mid-March, weeks before the jury trial of Chauvin, the city of Minneapolis agreed to compensate Floyd's family with \$27 million for the wrongful death, the largest such settlement in the city's history.

The three other officers involved in Floyd's murder—J. Alexander Kueng, 27, Thomas Lane, 38, and Tou Thao, 35—are scheduled for trial in March on state charges of aiding and abetting both murder and manslaughter. All four officers have been charged by the US Justice Department with federal offenses, Chauvin for excessive force and violating Floyd's civil rights, Kueng and Thao, for failing to intervene to stop Chauvin and Kueng, Lane and Thao for deliberate indifference for failing to provide medical care to Floyd.

Chauvin has also been charged in a separate federal indictment for an incident of police brutality in 2017 where he used a choke hold on a 14-year-old and beat the teenager in the head with a policemen's flashlight.

All of these charges—along with the prosecution, conviction and now sentencing of Chauvin—are a measure of the concern within the US ruling establishment about the explosive social and political implications of the ongoing police violence against the working class and poor of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. The source of the disproportionate rate of police brutality and violence facing minority populations is to be found in the conditions of poverty and socio-economic inequality that dominate American capitalist society.



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