

New video shows Pennsylvania police killing 19 year old who was trying to surrender

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20 November 2021

Newly released video footage from late 2020 shows the Pennsylvania State Police shooting and killing Stroudsburg teenager Christian Hall while the latter was surrendering to them after a long standoff on an overpass. The new footage contradicts the “suicide by cop” narrative put forward by the Monroe County district attorney’s office and the state police to justify the killing.

The video was obtained by NBC News and Spotlight PA after it was turned over by Hall’s parents. Gareth and Fe Hall have filed a lawsuit against the state police responsible for shooting their son.

Christian Hall, who had been diagnosed with depression, was shot on December 30, 2020. A whole team of state police responded to a 911 call, made by Hall himself, about a “possible suicider” on the bridge over Interstate 80. Among the officers were a corporal with over 20 years of experience on the force, a crisis negotiator of 15 years and a crisis intervention specialist.

The youth had posted images on social media of the overpass previously in the day alongside text asking “who would miss me.”

During the encounter, Hall reportedly waved a real-looking pellet gun at police, thereby creating a tense standoff situation that lasted for 90 minutes. When originally released, the police had blurred out the final moments of Hall’s life on the overpass.

According to NBC News, the last previously blurred seconds of the video show that “Hall first raised his hands to his sides, then above his head, holding the gun in one hand.” A police officer’s voice can be heard telling the others, “If he doesn’t drop it just take him.” Shortly afterward shots are fired and Hall is killed. The officers who shot Hall have not yet been identified.

Despite not dropping the gun, the video makes clear

that Hall had stepped away from the overpass ledge and was walking toward the police officers with his hands up.

As part of the investigation into Hall’s death, the state police handed over its findings to the office of Monroe County District Attorney E. David Christine Jr., which concluded the shootings were necessary to protect the lives of the officers.

According to the county’s assistant district attorney, Michael Mancuso, in March, Hall’s death was a “classic suicide by cop scenario.” Mancuso continued, “Frankly, it’s a testament to the troopers that they didn’t shoot sooner.”

Many were dubious of the district attorney’s office, which “regularly works with troopers to build cases,” according to NBC. In response to letters from the Hall family’s attorneys which accused the state troopers of falsifying the circumstances of their son’s death, NBC reports the DA’s office released a public statement “saying it stood by its finding that the shooting was justified.”

Hall’s parents are calling for an independent investigation into the shooting, with Gareth Hall telling NBC News that he “personally would like to see those police officers brought up on charges.”

“Everybody knows when you put your hands in the air that’s the universal sign of surrender. Why use excessive force?” stated Ben Crump, a lawyer representing the Hall family who also represented the family of George Floyd after his murder by police last year.

In October, Crump and co-counsel Devon Jacob sent letters calling for a new investigation into the matter to the state attorney general in Pennsylvania, the US Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The lawyers fault the Monroe County

district attorney for spinning a narrative that would influence a “viewer to believe that in the redacted portion of the video, Christian pointed the weapon at troopers and advanced on troopers; thereby justifying the use of deadly force.”

Despite the combined decades of training, the police ended up shooting Hall. This fact speaks to the real role of the police as agents of class rule against workers around the world. According to the *Washington Post*’s “Fatal Force” tracker of police killings, over the 12-month period prior to November 18, there were 907 fatal police shootings. In 2021, 789 people have been shot and killed by police.

In contrast to prevailing media narratives, the targets of police brutality are not primarily African Americans. In fact, of the 6,735 people fatally shot by police since January 1, 2015, who are cataloged in the *Post*’s “Fatal Force” statistics, 1,555 are categorized as “Black,” but nearly twice as many, 2,969 people, are counted as “White.” Hispanic victims made up 1,085 of the victims since 2015, while “Other” and “Unknown” races made up the rest.

In Pennsylvania alone, 141 people have been shot and killed by cops since the start of 2015, according to *Post* data. The state’s rate of fatal police shootings is 11 lethal shootings per million residents. This compares with states such as Illinois, which has had 134 fatal shootings since 2015 and about 10 dead at the hands of police per million residents.

Police killings have led to a long list of lawsuits brought against various departments across the state. The Pennsylvania State Police earlier this year settled a suit brought by the family of 51-year-old Gregory Longnecker, whose family accepted a settlement in connection with Longnecker’s death after he was run over by a bulldozer in the woods around Reading during a police pursuit.



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