Rate of police killings remained unchanged in 2021

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29 December 2021

According to a *New York Times* analysis of Mapping Police Violence's database on fatal police encounters, US police have killed 1,646 people since George Floyd's murder in May of last year. Moreover, with at least 1,051 deaths recorded in 2021 alone, police continue to kill about three people per day on average.

In addition to a second year of the COVID-19 pandemic which has killed more than 400,000 people, American workers have been forced to endure another year of terror at the hands of police. Some statistics and prominent cases for the year are as follows:

• On March 29, 2021, Chicago police shot and killed Adam Toledo, a 13-year-old Hispanic boy, in a working-class neighborhood. Officers chased Toledo down an alleyway before he was shot once in the chest while attempting to surrender to police. According to Mapping Police Violence, Chicago police killed five other people this year.

• According to the *Los Angeles Times*, LAPD officers shot at least 37 people in 2021, killing 17 of them. LAPD officers killed two men on Christmas Day, and another man on Christmas Eve. On December 23, a Los Angeles police officer recklessly fired an assault weapon in a crowded clothing store, striking and killing 14-year-old Valentina Orellana-Peralta while she hid with her mother in a fitting room.

• Pasquotank County Sheriff deputies shot and killed Andrew Brown Jr. in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, on April 21, 2021. Brown, a 42-year-old father of seven, was killed in his driveway as deputies attempted to serve him an arrest warrant for drug-related charges. Officers ambushed Brown and shot him in the back of the head as he attempted to drive away. North Carolina's district attorney declined to file charges against the officers involved. North Carolina police have killed 21 people this year.

• The *Idaho Press* reported an increase in police involved shootings in Idaho in 2021 compared to last year. Idaho police killed 12 people this year, more than double the five recorded incidents in 2020. Boise police shot Zachary Snow, 26, after his mother called police to tell them Snow was struggling and suicidal. He was shot after threatening to jump off a building.

• The three states with the highest number of police killings in 2021 are California (140), Texas (93) and Georgia (50.) Because violent encounters with police officers are so common, Mapping Police Violence reports there have only been 12 days in 2021 where US police did not kill someone.

Recent high-profile cases involving former officers convicted of murder charges—including Derick Chauvin for the murder of George Floyd, Jason Meade for the shooting of Casey Goodson Jr. and Kim Potter for shooting Daunte Wright—could give the impression that police are being held accountable for their crimes, but the numbers show the American ruling class continues to preside over a ruthless police regime.

According to Philip M. Stinson, a criminal justice professor at Bowling Green State University, despite 2021's increase in murder or manslaughter charges against officers, the overwhelming majority of officers involved in fatal encounters never face charges, much less convictions. In fact, less than 2 percent of officers involved in the more than 1,000 killings each year are charged with murder.

Stinson told the *Times* 21 officers have been charged with murder or manslaughter for an on-duty shooting this year— although five of the officers charged are facing charges for the same incident. While it is an increase from the 16 officers charged last year, it remains a minute fraction of police involved in deadly incidents.

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After the eruption of mass multi-racial protests against police violence triggered by Floyd's murder in May 2020, the Democratic Party and pseudo-left have worked to redirect popular opposition to police violence into the divisive dead-end of racialist identity politics while promoting illusions that the police can be reformed. However, the experience of the last year shows just the opposite. The much-hyped George Floyd Justice and Policing Act, a collection of tepid reforms, was dropped by the Democrats after it failed to secure enough support to overcome a Republican filibuster in the Senate.

President Joe Biden, meanwhile, has given his backing to the funneling of pandemic relief funds to the police. Biden announced in June that states and localities could use any portion of the $350 million allotted to them through the American Rescue Plan to fund their police departments.

The deadly force police regularly employ against the population is an inevitable result of a society riven with inequality and social contradictions. The victims of the police are of every race, ethnicity and gender—predominantly poor and working class. As the crisis of capitalism intensifies, the ruling class will increasingly rely on its "special bodies of armed men" to repress any form of social discontent or any working-class movement that threatens its privileges.

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