San Antonio, Texas, officers assault protesters after fatal police shooting

Andy Hartmann
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On Monday, police in San Antonio, Texas, killed a man they claimed pulled out a gun while they were trying to arrest him. Following the shooting, a crowd of protesters confronted police, who used pepper spray against the group.

The victim, identified by family members as 27-year-old Kevin Johnson, was wanted on two felony warrants for being in possession of a firearm, stemming from a February incident in which Johnson met up with two friends and fired a gun in the air.

In a media briefing Police Chief William McManus said the shooting occurred after three officers spotted Johnson on the city's westside near North Hamilton Street and West Laurel. Police claimed that they were attempting to arrest Johnson when he fled. According to police, Johnson reached for a gun in his waistband during the encounter, at which point he was shot.

He died at the scene, where a handgun was recovered, McManus said, adding that he could not provide details of the exchange since he had not reviewed body camera footage.

Johnson's sister, Jasmine Johnson, said witnesses told Johnson's family that police shot him nine times in the back. She noted that Johnson had a troubled past and suffered from mental health disorders but was working to change his life.

"He's not a bad person so there's no reason why this should have happened," Jamie Johnson told the Associated Press. "Nobody deserves to get shot in the back nine times."

"They shot my son from behind, and that's wrong," said Johnson's mother, Arlene Garcia. "They shot him nine times, and nobody here has nothing to say to me. Nobody has nothing to say."

Immediately after the shooting, family, friends and community members demanded transparency from San Antonio police. Video footage of the demonstrations show an angry multiracial crowd protesting and calling on the San Antonio Police Department to release body camera footage of the incident. With no commitment forthcoming, the crowd became incensed with police, who used pepper spray on a group which began rocking a police car.

Family members and activists are demanding the release of body cam footage.

"Regardless of whether he was armed or not, this is a clear show of excessive force," Ananda Tomas of the police accountability groups ACT 4 SA told KENS5. "The response of the community that we saw yesterday shows a critical need and urgency to release the body cam footage, not to give answers and some relief, but to show you are accountable to us and transparent to us."

A memorial of candles, flowers and religious items was erected for Johnson on the block where he died. His family held a candlelight vigil and balloon release on Tuesday evening.

Speaking to Texas Public Radio during Tuesday's vigil, Johnson's mother, Arlene Garcia, explained that she had been bruised and pepper-sprayed by police during Monday's protest when she demanded answers about her son's death. "For asking questions, this happened to me yesterday because I wanted answers," Garcia said. "And someone, one of them officers, put their hand on me, and they pepper-sprayed me as well."

The three police officers involved in the killing have been placed on administrative leave.

Johnson's death was the first fatal police shooting in San Antonio this year. The department reported six shootings last year where someone was killed or injured through the month of April, while there were 18 such shootings in 2020. There have been at least 15 fatal police shootings in Texas since the first recorded

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shooting of 2022 in the state on January 31, when Nathan Humphrey was shot down in Harris County, Texas.

According to a database maintained by the *Washington Post*, which compiles police shootings based on local news, social media and police reports, Johnson was the 168th person killed by police in the United States so far this year. Since mass protest erupted across the US and internationally in the wake of the murder of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, American police officers have killed more than 1,800 people.

As in previous years, so far in 2022 the police have claimed victims of every race, ethnicity and gender. Where race has been identified in the *Post's* database the largest share is white, following by African Americans and then Hispanics.

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