

Democratic Mayor of Akron, Ohio reimposes curfew as police continue to riot against protesters

Jacob Crosse
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For nearly a week, the working class city of Akron, located in northeast Ohio, has been turned into an effective police state by Democratic Mayor Dan Horrigan, following the release of police body camera footage showing the brutal and criminal police murder of Jayland Walker in a hail of bullets on June 27.

The ongoing police assault against the democratic rights of Akron residents continued on Thursday after Horrigan, in close coordination with the fascistic Akron Police department and the FBI, reimposed a nightly curfew for downtown Akron.

The mayor and the entire US ruling class are terrified that the brutal character of Walker's killing, caught on police body cameras, will ignite a social explosion similar to the nationwide and international protests that followed in the wake of the police murder of George Floyd in 2020.

Walker's death, like Floyd's before him and the over 1,000 who are killed by police in the US every year, exposes the fallacy that the police, funded generously by the Democratic and Republican Parties alike, exist to protect the entire population and ensure general tranquility. The police impose capitalist "law and order" through lethal violence. They are given immense powers and protections by the state to kill with almost complete impunity all those who might threaten capitalist rule.

The new indefinite curfew imposed by Horrigan began at 10 p.m. Thursday and encompasses the downtown core, which includes the police station, two major hospitals, a public park and the city's largest homeless shelters. Prior to the start of the curfew, dozens of protesters gathered outside the Harold K. Stubbs Justice Center. However, none were outside

once the curfew began.

At 10 p.m., only police and a few media members were outside the police station. But as Molly Walsh for the *Akron Beacon Journal* reported, beyond the curfew zone, protesters had gathered outside the home of Charlie Brown, the deputy mayor for public safety. One protester interviewed by Walsh said that they were protesting outside Brown's home because "this is a charge against every city official that doesn't do everything in their power to release the names of the officers, relieve them of their jobs, without pay... we demand that they are charged for these crimes and we demand justice for Jayland Walker."

Social media video posted Thursday evening confirms that police have continued to harass protesters outside the curfew zone.

Protests against police violence began in Akron—a city of 200,000 approximately 40 miles south of Cleveland—Wednesday, June 29 and have been ongoing ever since. Protests have also been held throughout the United States. In the last week, protests in support of Walker were held in Columbus, Ohio; Washington D.C. and New York City, with more planned for this weekend.

Despite the release of police body camera footage on Sunday showing that the cops not only killed Walker, who was unarmed, but continued to unload rounds into his body well after he had collapsed on the pavement, anti-police violence protests in Akron and throughout the country have been overwhelmingly peaceful.

The same cannot be said for the Akron Police Department. Just before July 4, Mayor Horrigan imposed the first curfew, after previously cancelling Fourth of July celebrations. In his statement

announcing a state of emergency and imposition of the curfew, Horrigan slandered protesters as “violent,” giving the Akron Police Department, teeming with fascists and racists, a blank check to “preserve peace in our community.”

Since Sunday night, the police have engaged in nightly attacks on small groups of protesters and even journalists. Riot police have not only beaten protesters, but have deliberately targeted them with tear gas rounds, which, in addition to containing chemicals that can induce an abortion, are fired at high velocity and can be lethal.

Dozens of protesters have been injured and over 55 have been arrested on bogus charges of “rioting” and “disorderly conduct” for allegedly violating the curfew and police directives. In the last 48 hours, protesters who were arbitrarily detained have given interviews on conditions inside the city’s jails, describing violent police menacing them with shotguns as they remained chained by their wrists and ankles, while at the same time being denied medical care.

Among those placed in handcuffs and assaulted by police Wednesday evening were Jacob Blake Sr., the father of Jacob Blake Jr., who was shot in the back seven times in August 2020 by a Kenosha, Wisconsin police officer, leaving him paralyzed. The officer who shot Blake was “investigated” by the state of Wisconsin and cleared of any wrongdoing. He is currently back on patrol.

The shooting of Blake Jr. led to multi-day, multiracial anti-police violence protests in Kenosha. Like in Akron, in response to demands from the working class community for police accountability, the Democratic mayor of Kenosha brought in extra police forces and imposed a curfew.

The Kenosha police, along with state police and federal agents, permitted fascistic militia groups to descend on the city, violate the curfew and assault protesters. This created the conditions for ardent Trump supporter and honorary Proud Boy Kyle Rittenhouse to travel from Illinois, enter the city and shoot three anti-police violence protesters, killing two.

In his trial last year, Rittenhouse was acquitted on all charges after the pro-Trump judge overseeing the trial forbade any testimony and evidence that would point to the political nature of the killings or Rittenhouse’s association with fascist militia groups.

While Rittenhouse is free, Blake Sr. has a warrant for his arrest. Despite the fact that Blake Sr. suffers from a disability and was on the sidewalk during Wednesday’s protest, police violently arrested him, causing him to suffer a seizure and become unresponsive.

Blake Sr. was transported to the emergency room of Akron General Hospital Wednesday night. The hospital was put on lockdown by the police, who refused to let any of Blake’s associates inside. For several hours Wednesday night, Blake’s condition was unknown to friends and family.

Another anti-police violence protester arrested Wednesday night by the Akron police was Bianca Rice, aunt of Breonna Taylor. Taylor, a 26-year-old African-American emergency room technician, was murdered in her apartment by three Louisville, Kentucky police in March 2020. The police conducted a “no-knock” raid on her apartment and shot her in her sleep. None of the police who murdered her were ever charged in her killing.

Blake Sr. was charged with riot, resisting arrest, failure to disperse and disorderly conduct. Rice is facing the same charges, minus the resisting arrest charge.

None of the cops who murdered Jayland Walker have been arrested or even identified.



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