No charges filed against gunman arrested outside home of Democratic representative Jayapal

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More than a week after an armed man was briefly detained for yelling death threats outside the home of US Representative Pramila Jayapal (Democrat-Washington state), authorities in Seattle have yet to file criminal charges.

Jayapal, the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the largest liberal bloc in the House of Representatives, is the most prominent South Asian immigrant in Congress. She came to the US from India more than 40 years ago, when she was 16 years old.

Brett Allen Forsell was arrested on suspicion of "malicious harassment" shortly before midnight on Saturday, July 10. He was released on Wednesday, July 13 after King County attorneys failed to present charges within 72 hours of his detention.

The 49-year-old man lives about a half-mile from the Jayapal residence in Seattle's Arbor Heights neighborhood, according to the *Seattle Times*. It is unknown at this time whether Forsell is linked to any right-wing groups.

At 11:25 p.m. on July 9, Seattle Police received a call from Jayapal reporting that a man was outside her home threatening her.

According to a probable cause statement filed by the Seattle Police Department and obtained by local television station KING5, police went to the residence after Jayapal told them that an unknown number of people were outside her home in a vehicle, shouting obscene language. The statement notes that Jayapal's husband, Steve Williamson, "thinks they may have shot a pellet gun but unsure."

The reporting police officer wrote that upon arriving at the scene, he saw "the suspect... standing in the middle of the street with hands in the air. He had a handgun (Glock 22 .40 cal) holstered on his waist." The cop said a neighbor reported hearing Forsell "yell something to the effect of, 'go back to India, I'm going to kill you.'"

The officer added, "The neighbor also reported that she saw the suspect's vehicle drive around the victim's residence approximately three times [with the suspect] yelling profanities." The officer reported that when the police spoke to Forsell, he acknowledged that he "knew who lived at the resident (sp) and wanted to pitch a tent on their property." Forsell did, in fact, bring metal rods used for camping onto Jayapal's lawn.

An extreme risk protection order (ERPO) was obtained by the Seattle Police on July 13, forcing Forsell to give up his firearms and any concealed carry permits. The ERPO explained that Forsell's gun was confiscated because his "behaviors appear to be escalating as he went from driving past Congresswoman Jayapal's residents (sp) to physically appearing in front of her home while armed with a loaded handgun."

The ERPO notes that in an audio clip provided to the police by Jayapal, Forsell can be heard saying "India," followed by several curse words directed at Jayapal. It also states that the sound of metal clacking can be heard on the tape, but it is unclear if this is from Forsell chambering a round into his Glock or from the metal poles of his tent.

The ERPO further states that Forsell previously emailed Jayapal in January, saying he did not like her because of "perceived political wrongdoings." It adds that Forsell's mother did not think he should have access to firearms because he had not been "eating or sleeping" recently and had been struggling after suffering a "workplace injury."

The protection order is temporary. Forsell is scheduled to appear at another protection order hearing on July 26, at which point a judge will rule whether the ERPO is to be extended beyond the current period.

In an interview with Jonathan Capehart on MSNBC on July 17, Jayapal revealed that the man had been stalking her for months. She called for charges to be filed against Forsell and said, "there is some footage of this, audio, that the police have." She added that the "vitriol and hatred" Forsell screamed at her was so loud that "everyone on my street could hear it," and that "these incidences have been happening over several months."

Asked about the release of Forsell and the failure to file charges against him, Jayapal said, "I firmly believe, maybe because I need

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to believe, that the prosecutors will be able to charge him. I think it would be a terrible, terrible sign, not just to me, but to elected officials across the country if they are not able to arrest him and charge him with what the Seattle Police detectives actually recommended in their probable cause statement."

In an interview with local television station KOMO, one neighbor of Jayapal's recalled the violent behavior exhibited by Forsell.

"I heard loud screaming, yelling and cursing, 'We'll kill you, go back to where you come from,' just things that were not OK and totally out of the ordinary for this street," the neighbor said. "We're a tight-knit group here on our street, we look out for each other, it's scary when somebody wants to come and disrupt that."

Jayapal said that through the ERPO, the police were able to confiscate another gun Forsell kept in his family home. Underscoring the seriousness of the threat against her and her family, she stressed that what happened outside her home "was not a protest," or even similar to the "quite hateful things" she regularly hears on her public congressional office line.

"This is entirely different," she said, "this level of violence, the vitriol hate. He was screaming things that I can't repeat. They were racist, sexist, xenophobic, designed to intimidate, threaten, and with the weapon, to harm me and my family."

Without naming Trump directly or calling out the Republican Party, which claims that the January 6 coup was "legitimate political discourse," Jayapal blamed "the person who occupied the White House," saying he "actually used and unleashed and mobilized all of that violence and white supremacy, using the tools of the federal government."

She went on to denounce Trump for "unleashing ... the most racist white supremacists, violent extremists, including Oath Keepers and the Proud Boys ... to try and steal an election and stage a coup."

While the Socialist Equality Party has well-known and unbridgeable political differences with Jayapal, we condemn the violent threats against her, defend her democratic right to conduct political work without threats and attacks from the fascist right, and support the demand that Forsell be charged and detained.

His remaining free and uncharged, despite the massive evidence, speaks to the right-wing sympathies among police, prosecutors and judges throughout the country.

Seattle is less than an hour's drive north of Lacey, Washington, where Michael Reinoehl, an anti-police-violence protester, was hunted down and executed by police and US Marshals in 2020, who claimed that he had killed an armed fascist attacking a protest in Portland, Oregon.

There was no such response to a gunman stalking and threatening a Democratic congresswoman, because many Seattle cops and prosecutors share Forsell's sentiments. As least six Seattle cops travelled 3,000 miles across the country to participate in Trump's January 6 coup. None has been charged with a crime, although two were fired after an internal investigation revealed they had crossed police barricades at the Capitol.

In this context it is notable that despite the deadly serious threats against Jayapal, and the fact that the person responsible for those threats is free as of this writing, neither President Joe Biden, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders or any other prominent Democratic politician has echoed Jayapal's demands that Forsell be arrested.

What the Democrats, including Jayapal, refuse to say is that the Republican Party under Trump is being transformed into a fascist party. Instead, from Biden on down, they continue to appeal for "unity" with their Republican "colleagues" and "friends" in order to prosecute the war against Russia in Ukraine and prepare for military confrontation against China, and intensify the attacks on the social and democratic rights of workers in the US.

While the Democrats remain silent on threats against their fellow party members, Republicans continue to incite violence against their political opponents, including Biden. In a Twitter video released on July 17, Texas Representative Ronny Jackson, while holding two AR-15 style rifles, said he had a "message for the Biden administration."

"If you are thinking about taking our ARs you can start here in Texas. On behalf of all abiding gun owners in the state of Texas, I just want to say, 'Come and get it.'"

The Democrats did nothing to oppose the January 6 coup attempt and have sought ever since to cover up the massive scale of the conspiracy that produced it, while leaving the plotters, beginning with Trump, free to plan the next coup. They seek to cover up the fascist threat for fear of unleashing an eruption of social opposition in the working class.

This is why it is critical for the working class to break from the Democratic Party and its "Republican colleagues" and take up the struggle for socialism. It is only through the abolition of the capitalist system that democratic rights can be defended.

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