

Protests continue in Akron, Ohio against decision not to prosecute police for murder of Jayland Walker

Samuel Davidson
19 April 2023

Protests are continuing in Akron, Ohio, after the announcement that the Attorney General will not file charges against the eight police officers who brutally murdered Jayland Walker last June.

Scores of protesters from throughout Akron and surrounding communities descended on the downtown courthouse within just a few hours of the Monday afternoon announcement by Ohio's Attorney General Dave Yost of the grand jury's decision.

Chanting "No justice, No peace" and "What do we want? Justice! When do we want it? Now!," protesters marched outside the courthouse. As rush hour approached other protesters arrived driving cars around the blocks in circles, honking their horns and causing traffic jams.

As evening fell and many of the demonstrators went home, police descended on those remaining and arrested six for minor traffic violations.

On Tuesday several hundred protesters gathered outside a local church and then marched downtown chanting as they went.

Walker was killed in the early morning hours of June 27, 2022 in a hail of bullets fired by at least eight police officers who had surrounded him. Autopsy reports show that Walker was hit by at least 46 bullets. Investigators have stated that Walker had more than 60 wounds on his body.

Walker, unarmed at the time he was murdered, was one of nearly 1,200 victims of police violence in 2022, the highest number of police killings in a decade. According to [PoliceViolenceReport.org](https://www.policeviolence.org/), officers were charged with a crime in only nine of these cases.

The Attorney General released a selection of material gathered over the past ten months by the Ohio Bureau

of Criminal Investigation (BCI).

A review of what was released shows that rather than an investigation of the police who murdered Walker, the report is a point-by-point justification for the police killing Walker in a hail of gunfire. This was the "evidence" presented to the grand jury to ensure that they would not issue any charges against any of the officers.

Walker was shot and killed by the police after he led them on a brief car chase after they had attempted to pull him over for a minor traffic violation.

The police claim that during the chase Walker fired a shot from his car. The prosecutor said this gave the police justification for using lethal force.

Yet it is clear from the video images that have been released that Walker was unarmed and may even have been trying to surrender when he was gunned down.

Repeatedly, Yost stated that police were justified in their fear for their lives. However, the video and images from that night show that officers had surrounded and were coming closer to Walker—not something they would have done if they believed that Walker could have shot them.

One officer even drove his car next to Walker in an effort to prevent him from opening the driver's door. This was clearly not something officers would do if they feared that Walker could shoot them from just a car width away.

Yost repeatedly said that officers did not know that Walker was unarmed when he left the car. Yet video and images taken from body camera video clearly show both of Walker's hands, neither of which were holding a gun.

Yost went on to say that Walker reaching his hand

into his waistband was an indication that he was reaching for a gun, and that he then turned around and raised his arms towards officers as if he was firing. However, this also is not supported when one looks at the video which has been released.

Rather what appears to be happening is that Walker saw that he was surrounded by officers and, realizing he had nowhere to run, was turning around to surrender.

The second slide, which Yost used to say that Walker was pointing at the officers, shows that Walker had already been struck by a bullet and was falling over backwards with his arms flying up.

Even after he was initially shot, police continued firing an unknown number of rounds. Video shows police reloading their guns. After the shooting stopped, rather than provide medical assistance, they then handcuffed Walker.

Even the reason for the initial stop of Walker was presented in a false light. Repeatedly it was stated that Walker was seen by police driving around the neighborhood in the early morning hours. Why this is a crime was never explained. Walker, a DoorDash driver, may simply have been working at the time.

Repeatedly during the conference, the reason the officers wanted to pull Walker over was described as a broken tail light. In fact the only thing that was not working on his car was a small light over the rear license plate.

They also said that Walker's car was spotted and followed the night before by officers of a neighboring town. However, the reports on that incident describe the driver as white.

In the weeks following Walker's murder thousands of people in Akron and throughout the area took part in protests against police brutality. Police under the direction of Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan, a Democrat, conducted a rampage against protesters, throwing scores of them in jail, with many being left for over 36 hours without access to their medications.

The brutalization of the working class by the police is an ongoing process. Protests and calls for police reform have not changed anything. The election of Democrats or more African American mayors and police chiefs has not reversed this trend.

This is due to the fact that the police are fundamentally an instrument to maintain the rule of the

capitalist class. Under conditions of growing inequality and the growing resistance to it, expressed in strikes and protests not only in the United States but throughout the world, this means that the capitalist class must rely even more on the police and other forces of repression to attack the working class.

Only the overturn of capitalism and its replacement with socialism, a system in which the productive capacity of humanity is used not for a tiny few but is democratically controlled and used for humanity as a whole, will the need for an oppressive state apparatus be ended.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact