

Philadelphia cop arrested in murder of Eddie Irizarry

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On Friday, September 8, Mark Dial of the Philadelphia Police Department surrendered to authorities for charges against him in the killing of Eddie Irizarry, 27. Dial shot Irizarry dead on August 14 as the young man sat in his car. District Attorney Larry Krasner announced that Dial would face first-degree murder charges, along with voluntary manslaughter and aggravated assault.

Charges were brought against Dial only because the killing was captured by a neighborhood security camera. Initially, authorities followed standard operating procedure for all such killings. They blamed the victim, asserting that Irizarry had left his car and lunged at police with a knife.

But then the neighborhood video footage emerged showing Officer Dial moving rapidly from his car, within a few seconds firing several shots through the windows of the parked vehicle, killing Irizarry.

The revelation forced the release of police body cam videos, which the Philadelphia Police Department had initially refused to share with Irizarry's family attorney, Shaka Johnson. The footage is even more damning than that taken from the neighborhood security camera. It shows Dial cursing, "I will f**king shoot you!" before immediately firing six shots at Irizarry within a few feet of the driver side window and windshield. A few seconds later officers open the door, revealing Irizarry, covered in blood and moaning, still seated behind the car's steering column.

The video shows that Irizarry was given no chance to communicate prior to the shots being fired. Nothing in the video suggests that Irizarry posed the slightest threat to Dial and his partner, who remains officially unidentified.

The footage forced police to abandon their initial claim that Irizarry lunged with a knife. But attorneys

for Dial have a new story. Dial now claims he opened fire because he thought Irizarry had a gun.

This is only the most recent line of defense to shield the Philadelphia Police Department. After her initial attempt to blame Irizarry fell apart, Police Commissioner Danielle Outlaw claimed that it was a "mistake." Attorney Johnson replied, "that was not a mislead, that is a blatant lie, and an attempt to sort of mislead an investigation, and quite frankly, to corrupt the court of public opinion."

It was not until nine days after the shooting, on August 23—the day after the neighborhood surveillance video of the killing was released—that Dial was handed a 30-day suspension. Even then, the official reason for the suspension was not for the shooting itself, but because Dial had refused to obey an order from a superior and had not cooperated with the internal police investigation.

The decision by the authorities to finally charge Dial with murder comes in the face of growing anger in the city. Since Irizarry's death, there have been protests near the area where he was killed, Willard Street. One group marched to the police station where Dial was stationed and demanded he be fired.

Cherish Honkala, a resident of Philadelphia and activist, spoke of the constant anxiety and fear of police in the community. "People are deathly afraid of the police here, especially if you're a young man," she said. "Anybody that's driving, I don't care who they are, if they get pulled over, they go into a panic attack." The sentiment is widely shared across the US.

The charges against Dial come two months away from the 2023 Philadelphia mayoral election between Democrat Cherelle Parker and Republican David Oh. Parker campaigned in the primaries on a law-and-order platform, pledging to hire 300 more police officers and

to implement unconstitutional stop-and-frisk policies against residents. Parker has been silent on Irizarry's shooting.

The Philadelphia Police Department is notorious for its violence. There have been some 2,600 formal complaints against it between 2016 and 2019. Among these, only 24 percent of cases were resolved in favor of the civilians. Between 2020-2023, there were 41 reported incidents of officer-involved shootings, resulting in 16 deaths, none of them police officers.

The vast majority of victims of police shootings and brutality are working class people, such as Irizarry, an auto mechanic born and raised in Puerto Rico. Irizarry's murder is another in a long line of police killings in the US. As of writing, 726 people have been killed by police in 2023. Well over 1,000 people are killed per year by police in America.

Media coverage of the recent developments in the Irizarry case has been overshadowed by salacious, round-the-clock coverage of Danelo Cavalcante, the escaped convict on the run for nearly two weeks prior to his September 13 capture. During the search for Cavalcante, militarized police units were dispatched across Pennsylvania, involving uniformed officers carrying semi-automatic rifles and even police combat units. Such extreme displays of overwhelming force are aimed to intimidate the population amidst unprecedented wealth inequality and social tension.



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