

Mississippi cop fires on vehicle in Walmart parking lot, killing 1-year-old child

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A one-year-old boy was killed and an adult critically injured Sunday afternoon when a police officer fired into a vehicle outside a Walmart in Senatobia, Mississippi. The child was identified by family and attorneys as Kohen Kartier Wiley. The officer who fired the shot has not been publicly named.

According to the Mississippi Department of Public Safety, officers from the Senatobia Police Department and the Tate County Sheriff's Office responded to a shoplifting call at the Walmart on US 51 and encountered two adults and a child leaving the store and entering a vehicle. The department press release states: "Officers attempted to stop the vehicle, but the driver drove in the direction of the officers, almost striking one. An officer then discharged their weapon, and the vehicle fled the scene."

The vehicle later reached a hospital, where the child was pronounced dead and another occupant was listed in critical condition. A video captured by a bystander from the front of the Walmart and broadcast by Fox13 News of Memphis shows officers chasing a vehicle, which then pulls away from them.

The *Guardian* reported that Carlos Haynes, the child's grandfather, described his grandson as a happy baby and said he was looking forward to watching him grow. "Someone ended it all before it could even start," Haynes said.

The state police account has outraged family, friends and residents because key evidence remains unreleased, while the narrative of an officer's life being in danger to justify the shooting is all too familiar. The same justification is being used by federal authorities to clear ICE agent Jonathan Ross for murdering Renée Nicole Good during the mass protests against the brutal treatment of immigrants in Minneapolis last January. Family members of Kohen Kartier Wiley say the

officer should never have placed the child in harm's way in the first place.

Civil rights attorney Ben Crump, who has been hired by the family, wrote on social media that "A 1-year-old child is dead after police officers in Mississippi opened fire on a vehicle in a crowded Walmart parking lot in Senatobia." He added that the child's mother said she tried to tell officers there was a baby in the car.

In the same statement, Crump said, "They fired anyway, leading to the death of an innocent 1-year-old." Crump dismissed the claims of justified use of force. The family is demanding the release of body-camera footage, dashcam video and Walmart surveillance video.

NBC News reported that Kohen was in the vehicle with his mother and a family friend when he was shot, and that the friend was seriously injured. One news report noted that the mother, Vellesiya Wiley, was "sharing her side of the story," pointing out that her understanding of events does not align with the law enforcement narrative.

Local news coverage also described officers surrounding the vehicle, the car moving away, and the shooting unfolding amid confusion. One witness interviewed on television news said she saw the scene escalate suddenly, while another account described the family's contention that police could have taken the vehicle's plate and pursued the matter later rather than firing with a child inside the car.

On Tuesday, family members, friends and community supporters gathered outside the Walmart to protest the killing, and police responded with tear gas. Reporters at the scene said the gas affected demonstrators and members of the press, turning the protest into a public confrontation over the use of force. Community members were not simply mourning; they were

demanding accountability in a case that involved the death of a child.

Aside from their self-justifying press release, state police have provided no additional information, and they say the case is now under investigation by the Mississippi Bureau of Investigation (MBI). MBI said its agents are gathering evidence and reviewing the circumstances surrounding the shooting, and local officials said the officer involved has been placed on leave.

The lack of information and failure to release the identity or bring criminal charges against the officer have deepened public suspicion that a coverup of the shooting is underway.

Senatobia is a small city in Tate County in northern Mississippi, about 30 miles south of the Tennessee border and 40 miles south of Memphis. The area has very low incomes and elevated poverty, and the local economy is dominated by low-wage work and limited public resources.

The state of Mississippi remains among the poorest in the US. ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) research found that 48 percent of households in the state were either in poverty or financially strained in 2024.

The Mapping Police Violence website ranks Mississippi as the state with the 12th highest number of police killings in the US, with 5.4 deaths per 1,000 people and a total of 215 people killed through June 8, 2026.

In 2025, the Police Violence Report said at least 1,201 people were killed by police in the US. Security.org's 2026 summary put the 2024 number at 1,202 and said gunshots caused 94 percent of police-involved deaths in 2025. Police use of firearms remains the dominant cause of fatal encounters between the public and law enforcement across the country.

Mississippi also has the highest rate of firearm mortality of any state in the country. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics, Mississippi was the only state in 2024 with a rate of 28 firearm deaths per 100,000 people.

In 2024, a federal judge handed down prison terms of 10 to 40 years for six white former Mississippi law enforcement officers, who pleaded guilty to breaking into a home without a warrant and torturing two black

men in an hours-long attack that included beatings, repeated uses of stun guns and assaults with a sex toy before one of the victims was shot in the mouth.

These statistics and incidents point to the fact that a routine shoplifting investigation can, in a split second, become a deadly confrontation in which a child is killed and an adult left critically injured. They also explain why the demand by the family of Kohen Kartier Wiley for transparency has found widespread support.



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