Protests erupt in Madison, Wisconsin following police execution of Corey Ruiz

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Protests and mass anger erupted in Madison, Wisconsin, Wednesday afternoon following the police execution of Corey Ruiz, a 38-year-old father and longtime resident of the city. An as-yet-unidentified Madison police officer shot Ruiz multiple times in the head in broad daylight and in front of dozens of people, many of whom recorded the incident. The footage quickly went viral because of the brutal character of the latest murder by US police and immigration agents.

In an initial press conference Wednesday following the killing, Madison Police Department (MPD) Chief John Patterson said police received a report shortly before 1 p.m. that a person was "allegedly checking parked vehicles." Patterson said police located the man, "but he fled on a bicycle and then traveled through some nearby backyards, we think in an attempt to get away."

At no point during the pursuit did Patterson claim that police witnessed Ruiz committing a crime. Nor did he state that police saw him brandish a weapon or attempt to assault officers or anyone else.

Patterson said that roughly half an hour after initially spotting Ruiz, police "reconnected" with him at the intersection of Baldwin and Williamson streets. Patterson said Ruiz "either fell off or was taken off of the bicycle by officers. We're not sure which. That's still being determined."

Videos circulating on social media appear to show police knocking Ruiz off the bicycle. Within seconds of Ruiz falling to the ground, four police officers, three men and one woman, have him surrounded. The male cops are seen wrestling with Ruiz, at which point one yells, "He's got a knife."

The female cop runs toward Ruiz, who is in the middle of the intersection trying to stand up, and yells, "Taser, Taser, Taser," before shooting him with the electronic shock device. After being shocked, Ruiz is seen falling to the ground and curling into the fetal position.

Despite video clearly showing Ruiz subdued by the Taser, Patterson claimed in his press conference that its deployment was "unsuccessful."

Patterson claimed that the cop who proceeded to shoot Ruiz in the head was injured at some point during the brief struggle by a "fixed-blade" knife wielded by Ruiz. It is not apparent in any of the circulating videos when this alleged injury occurred.

One of the male cops is seen placing his knee and most of his body weight on Ruiz's left hip as he lies curled up on the pavement. Another cop raises his right leg and appears to stomp on Ruiz's left thigh. At this point, the third male cop, who is facing Ruiz, pulls out his pistol, leans forward and shoots Ruiz approximately three times in the head.

Patterson said the cop who shot and killed Ruiz is a "veteran officer." Video recorded after the shooting shows the officer being led away from the scene and speaking with other cops. Despite allegedly being injured by a knife, the cop is not seen seeking medical attention or applying bandages. No blood is visible on him.

After shooting Ruiz, the cops did not immediately render aid. Instead, they restrained his wrists and began going through his pockets. One cop is seen tossing what appears to be a large kitchen knife to the side. Police pulled out Ruiz's wallet as blood from his skull poured onto the pavement, staining the street red.

Witnesses immediately reacted with horror and anger. "No, you didn't have to kill him!" a woman yelled, adding, "I saw everything!"

The shooting immediately prompted protests in the working class neighborhood, home to not only college students but also longtime residents, including many immigrants. Protests continued Thursday as hundreds of people descended on Capitol Square, prompting the cancellation of "Concerts on the Square." Protesters chanted, "Black lives matter," and marched down East Washington Avenue toward a vigil hosted by Ruiz's friends.

Jazzman Brown, a friend of Ruiz since they attended middle school and La Follette High School together in Madison, told Channel 3000 that Ruiz struggled with homelessness and mental health issues but was "more than his rap sheet."

Beginning in 2007, Ruiz was convicted of several misdemeanors, including charges related to drug possession, as well as felonies that included battery or threats against a judge and resisting police.

Brown added, "He was a human. He had children, a family, people that loved him. And he did not deserve to be gunned down in front of the world."

She continued, "I don't know one person that hasn't seen

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that video. And how would you feel if that was your brother, that was your sister, if that was your loved one like that? He didn't deserve that."

Terrified that mass anger over the police killing, following the recent ICE murders of Lorenzo Salgado Araujo and Johan Duran Guerrero, will lead to a political explosion against the entire police state apparatus, Democratic politicians and police officials rushed to express their condolences, plead for calm and patience, and urge residents to place their faith in the so-called "independent" investigation that will follow.

Ruiz was not killed because he posed an imminent threat to the public. He was pursued over an unsubstantiated allegation that he was checking the doors of parked cars. His poverty, homelessness and mental illness placed him among the most vulnerable sections of the working class and made him a target of the police.

The police do not exist to "serve and protect" the population. Their essential function is to defend private property and the wealth and power of the financial oligarchy. This is why the homeless, the mentally ill and the poorest layers of society are subjected to constant surveillance, harassment, arrest and violence.

A review by the Homelessness Policy Research Institute found that police encounters with homeless people are more likely to involve force than encounters with housed people, particularly when the victim has a mental illness. In Los Angeles, homeless people were arrested at 17 times the rate of the general population.

This persecution is bipartisan. Democrats have joined Republicans in transforming homelessness, itself the product of soaring rents, poverty wages and the destruction of social services, into a crime.

Following the Supreme Court's 2024 *Grants Pass* ruling, Democratic California Governor Gavin Newsom ordered state agencies to dismantle homeless encampments and later demanded that cities adopt ordinances forcing homeless people to relocate every 72 hours. Nationwide, more than 350 cities and 14 states have enacted measures criminalizing homelessness since the ruling. These policies place thousands of defenseless people in the direct line of fire of the police.

Pleading for calm Thursday, Madison's Democratic mayor, Satya Rhodes-Conway, said "Good investigations take time," and that she supported "peaceful" protests.

The "investigation" will no doubt exonerate the police execution. In his initial press conference on July 22, Patterson justified the shooting by pointing to the presence of a knife.

"And I will say that when a knife is produced during officers' apprehension arrest, the overall situation is clearly elevated. It becomes incredibly dangerous and it obviously increases risk for everyone there, for the officer, for the person as well."

"I think it severely narrows the scope of options and possible outcomes," he added.

A similar "independent" investigation was launched by the state of Wisconsin following the police killing of Tony Robinson, an unarmed 19-year-old who was shot and killed on March 6, 2015. Robinson was killed roughly a block and a half from where Ruiz was gunned down. Robinson was biracial, and his killing prompted mass protests throughout the city.

Following that investigation, Dane County District Attorney Ismael Ozanne, who remains the county's chief prosecutor, announced that no charges would be brought against the cop who killed Robinson, Matt Kenny.

Kenny, who remains with the Madison Police Department, had previously killed Ronald Brandon, a mentally disturbed white man. Brandon called police and reported a man on a porch with a gun. That man was Brandon himself, and he was armed only with a pellet gun.

As police approached Brandon, who was still speaking with emergency operators, he said, "I think he called you because he wants to end his drunkenness. I hear the sirens coming. Jesus criminy. It's not a real gun. I think he wants to be taken away."

Kenny shot and killed Brandon on his porch, a deed that earned him the Madison Police Department's highest honor, a "medal of valor."

There is no centralized government database tracking police killings in the United States. Journalists and researchers are forced to piece together news reports to provide insight into the near-daily police killings that occur across the country.

The billions of dollars poured into police budgets in states and cities, led by both Democrats and Republicans, have not reduced the number of people killed by police. Over the last decade, police have killed more than 1,000 people every year. In 2026, Mapping Police Violence had tracked at least 689 police killings as of early July.

The Jeff Bezos-owned *Washington Post*, which previously tracked 10,429 people killed by police between 2015 and 2024, stopped maintaining its database following Trump's return to the White House.

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