



The NATIONAL INTEREST

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Large-Scale Protests Against Police Brutality and Racial Inequality

Protests have flared in major cities across the United States this week in response to the heinous murder of George Floyd, an African American man, by a police officer in Minneapolis. Demonstrators have been out in force protesting against police brutality, which has started a global movement to combat racial injustice and police violence. In the United States and around the world, people have taken to the streets to denounce systemic inequality and racial discrimination. Adding fuel to the fire, Amnesty International also released a report that found American police officers from dozens of cities were being trained in Israel, or by Israeli military forces. The report came immediately after the murder of Eyad Hallaq, an unarmed and mentally disabled Palestinian man who was killed by Israeli border guards in Jerusalem's old city. In light of these events, the issues of police brutality and racial discrimination have been at the forefront around the world this week.

In the United States, major protests were held in New York City, Washington D.C., Minneapolis, and other metropolitan areas. Curfews were set in place by the authorities in Los Angeles, New York, and elsewhere as government officials tried to manage the protests. The issues of racial profiling and discrimination were already prevalent due to the extrajudicial murder of Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia a few weeks ago. After the murder of George Floyd, these problems burst into the spotlight as people across the country demanded fundamental change. The protests have predominantly been peaceful, although they have been marred by a small group of people taking advantage of the chaos to loot stores and vandalize property. In response to the protests, police have used riot control tactics including the deployment of tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse demonstrators.

Despite the majority of protestors exercising their right to assemble peacefully, there have been reports of radical groups trying to hijack the demonstrations. President Trump blamed the far-left group Antifa for much of the violence and looting that occurred during the protests, and said his administration would be designating the organization as a domestic terror group. On the other side, radical far-right groups have also been active at the protests with reports that white nationalists were seeking to start confrontations with peaceful activists.

During the protests, government officials have taken sides. President Trump has repeatedly called for state governors to activate their national guard and use force against protestors, in addition to threatening to send the military into cities with continued unrest. The president has also started using the phrase "law and order" while discussing the demonstrations, insinuating that the people protesting racial injustice are engaged in illegal activity. Additionally, while discussing the individuals using the protests as cover to loot shops, President Trump quoted a former Miami police chief who said "when they start looting, we start shooting" when describing the instructions given to his officers while apprehending criminals. On Monday, the president sanctioned the use of tear gas on protestors in Washington D.C. who were congregated around St. John's Church, so that he could walk to the church for a photo opportunity. President Trump's actions have been condemned in many circles, most prominently by former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who rebuked his former boss in a scathing statement given to the Washington Post. Despite the best efforts of President Trump, the protests continue peacefully in cities across the United States.