

New Fatal Shooting in California

More Protests Erupt in U.S. Against Killing of Black Man



Demonstrators protest the death of Tyre Nichols on January 28, 2023 in Memphis, Tennessee.

MEMPHIS (Dispatches) – More protests have erupted in the U.S. city of Memphis against the killing of young Black man, Tyre Nichols, by the police, with protesters marching blaming the U.S. government for the rising violence against the Black community and saying the system is “murdering us.”

Gathered for a common cause, the residents of Memphis, which consists of 65 percent of Black people, took to the streets as they held placards reading “RIP Tyre Nichols” and chanted, “Whose streets? Our streets!”, and “No justice, No peace”.

At one point, the demonstrators also surrounded and cat-called a police car that was monitoring the march, and shouted against it, “Say his name! Tyre Nichols”.

“It’s supposed to be a system that protects us, that provides safety for us. But

instead, it’s killing us, murdering us, innocent lives who just began their adulthood,” lamented the protesters.

“I go around Memphis, scared, every single night. This is a place where I get my education and where I live, and so I don’t want to be scared going across the street,” a protester said adding that: “I need to change to survive, just as many other 19-year-olds need to change to survive. I want to make it to 35. I want to make it past 30. I wished Tyre could have made it past 30.”

In the meantime, the police unit that included the Memphis officers involved in the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols was disbanded on Saturday amid the snowballing protests.

In a statement, the police department said it was permanently deactivating the SCORPION unit after the police chief spoke with members of Nichols’ family, community leaders and other officers.

Consisting of 40 officers, the SCORPION unit was launched in November 2021 to target “violent crime”.

The Memphis protest organizer Amber Sherman said this is only a first step and other, similar specialized units also need to be eliminated, as she referred to the dismissal of the unit that attacked Nichols.

“Just by ending that unit, that’s a good move. But then you still have these same task forces that are doing that same terrorism, assaulting people, over criminalizing, the poor and low-income neighborhoods,” she said.

In another development in the U.S., three people have been shot dead and four others injured at a home near Beverly Hills, at what U.S. police described as a gathering at a short-term rental property.

Emergency services rushed to the swanky address in the Benedict Canyon area of Los Angeles late Saturday, where they found three people dead in a vehicle parked outside.

Four others were being treated at hospital, two of them for critical injuries.

Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) said the attack was not random. Neighbors reported seeing several cars driving away from the shooting scene within minutes of the gunfire.

The incident happened in an area nestled between Beverly Hills and Bel Air, where multi-million dollar homes with lush landscaping are located.

Detectives investigating the attack say it happened at a “short-term rental home,” The Los Angeles Times reported.

Report: Pentagon Quietly Lobbying for F-16s to Ukraine



Ukrainian servicemen unpack a shipment of military aid delivered as part of the U.S. assistance to Ukraine, at the Boryspil airport, outside Kyiv, on Feb. 11.

WASHINGTON (Politico/Reuters) – U.S. military officials are “quietly pushing” the Department of Defense to greenlight the delivery of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine to help in the fight against Russia, sources said.

So far, no countries have provided Kiev with modern Western-made warplanes, despite repeated requests.

According to one Pentagon official and two other sources familiar with the matter interviewed by the outlet, the campaign inside the Department of Defense to send the aircraft to Ukraine is “gaining momentum”. Optimism has been partly spurred by the recent decision to send M1 Abrams tanks and Patriot air defense systems to Kiev.

Referring to potential F-16 deliveries, a senior DOD official told the outlet, “I don’t think we are opposed”, while noting that a final decision has not been made. Kiev has yet to insist that fighter jets are the top priority, the official added, explaining that the U.S. is focused on helping Ukraine meet its more immediate needs.

One POLITICO source said that it could take the U.S. “weeks” to make a decision on either sending its own jets to Ukraine, or approving the re-export of F-16s from other countries.

After the U.S. and Germany agreed to provide Ukraine with 31 Abrams and 14 Leopard 2 tanks respectively, Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky doubled down on his requests for long-range missiles and fighter jets.

While Germany signaled that

it would not supply Ukraine with warplanes, on Wednesday, when asked about fighter jets, U.S. National Security Council Spokesman John Kirby stated that Washington is “in constant discussions” with Kiev about its military capabilities.

“Can’t blame the Ukrainians for wanting more and more systems. It’s not the first time that they’ve talked about fighter jets. But I don’t have any announcements to make on that front,” he said.

Russia has repeatedly warned the West against supplying Ukraine with weapons, arguing that it would only prolong the conflict.

On Thursday, Kremlin Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov stated that the arms deliveries serve as further proof that Western countries are directly involved in the stand-off between Moscow and Kiev.

A Kremlin spokesman told the state RIA Novosti news agency on Sunday that Russian President Vladimir Putin is open to contacts with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz though has no phone call scheduled with him.

“For now, there are no agreed talks (with Scholz) in the schedule. Putin has been and remains open to contacts,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti.

Scholz was quoted by the Berlin daily Tagesspiegel in an interview published on Sunday as saying, “I will also speak to Putin again – because it is necessary to speak.”

At Least 51 Killed in Twin Pakistan Transport Tragedies

BELA (AFP) – At least 51 people were killed in two separate transport accidents in western Pakistan on Sunday, when a bus plunged off a bridge and a boat carrying a class of children capsized.

Forty-one are so far confirmed dead after their bus crashed into a ravine in southwestern Balochistan province, while at least 10 students died in the boating accident in northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, officials said.

As many as three are still missing in the waters, with a rescue operation underway.

At the remote site of the bus crash, north of the city of Bela in Lasbela district, senior administration official Hamza Anjum said “the dead bodies... are beyond recognition”.

Anjum said 40 corpses were retrieved from the wreck alongside three injured, one of whom died shortly after. The remaining two survivors were in “serious” condition.

The charred brown husk of the vehicle chassis smoked on a dry riverbed under the bridge on Sunday, according to video released by the provincial government.

A team of men used heavy machinery to move the twisted metal aside and pull out the burnt remains, which were then shrouded in white cloth.

Head of the local rescue service Asghar Ramazan told AFP the bus had been loaded with containers of oil.

“When the bus fell down, it immediately caught fire,” he said. The oil “caused the fire to flare up so much that it was difficult to control”, he added.

The bus was reportedly carrying a total of 48 passengers when it hit a pillar on the bridge and careened off course earlier on Sunday.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, local police official Mir Rauf told AFP all of the drowned so far recovered from the boating accident on Tanda Dam lake were aged between seven and 14.

A total of 17 were rescued alive from the reservoir by Sunday afternoon.

“Everything was normal until suddenly the boat overturned,” said 11-year-old survivor Muhammad Mustafa from his hospital bed in the nearby city of Kohat.

“I got stuck under the boat,” he told AFP. “My shawl and sweater weighed me down, so I took them off.”

“The water was extremely cold and my body went numb. I thought I was going to pass out when a man on an inflatable tube saved me.”

One of the rescued was a teacher, who remained unconscious as the rescue operation continued for up to three pupils still missing.

The class of madrassa students “went out for a picnic and boating” at the scenic location, district police chief Adbul Rauf told AFP.

“According to the information so far, the boat was in a dilapidated condition and it was overloaded too,” he said.



SEOUL (AFP) – North Korea on Sunday denied providing arms to Moscow after the United States said Pyongyang supplied rockets and missiles to Russia’s private military group Wagner. In a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, a senior North Korean official rejected the accusations, warning that the U.S. would face a “really undesirable result” if it persisted in spreading the “self-made rumor”. “Trying to tarnish the image of (North Korea) by fabricating a non-existent thing is a grave provocation that can never be allowed and that cannot but trigger its reaction,” said Kwon Jong Gun, director general of the Department of U.S. Affairs. He also called it “a foolish attempt to justify its offer of weapons to Ukraine”. Earlier this week, U.S. President Joe Biden promised 31 Abrams tanks, one of the most powerful and sophisticated weapons in the U.S. army, to help Kyiv fight off Moscow’s invasion. The move drew a rebuke Friday from Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who accused Washington of “further crossing the red line” by sending the tanks into Ukraine.

NEW DELHI (Dispatches) – University students across India are either being suspended or being detained by the police, over the screening of a BBC documentary on Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s alleged role during the deadly Gujarat sectarian riots in 2002, as India continues to stop even the personal viewing of the documentary. In one of the several similar incidents, police forces swarmed the Delhi University campus, after student groups supportive of Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) objected to the screening the students had planned to organize within the premises, that led to 24 students being detained and many being manhandled. Protests erupted at DU on Friday over the police crackdown on students to watch the controversial documentary. Similar disruptions and protests have been reported from universities across the country since the first episode of the two-part documentary was aired last week on BBC-2 in the UK, which the Indian government has called a piece of “propaganda”. The Modi government is trying its best to stop the public screening and even a private viewing of the controversial documentary that reveals an inquiry done by the UK government after the 2002 Gujarat riots also claimed the lives of British citizens, along with killing at least 2,000 people, mostly Muslims.

LONDON (Daily Mail) – The UK Ministry of Defence has been spying on the social media accounts of public figures critical of the government’s COVID-19 policies since the start of the pandemic, a whistleblower told the Daily Mail newspaper. The military’s secretive 77th Brigade compiled dossiers on anyone with a sizable following who questioned the lockdowns, mandates, and predictions of doom that characterized London’s response to the novel coronavirus outbreak, according to the source, who worked for the unit during the pandemic. The unit’s duties included combating “disinformation” and “harmful narratives... from purported experts”, assisted by raw data scraped from social media by AI and civilian employees. Undesirable narratives were suppressed or removed, while government narratives were promoted. “I developed the impression the government was more interested in protecting the success of their policies than uncaring any potential foreign interference,” the whistleblower told the Mail.

LONDON (AP) – British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak fired the chairman of the governing Conservative Party on Sunday for a “serious breach” of ethics rules in failing to come clean about a tax dispute. Sunak had faced days of pressure to sack Nadhim Zahawi amid allegations he settled a multimillion-dollar unpaid tax bill while he was in charge of the country’s Treasury. The prime minister acted after a standards probe found Zahawi had breached the ministerial code of conduct. It said he had failed to disclose details of his dispute with tax authorities and the fact that he had paid a penalty. In a letter to Zahawi, Sunak said he had been forced to act to keep his promise that his government “would have integrity, professionalism and accountability at every level.” Zahawi had acknowledged the tax dispute but argued his error was “careless and not deliberate.” In his response to Sunak, Zahawi pledged to support the prime minister as a backbench lawmaker and made no reference to the ethics inquiry.

TUNIS (AP) – Tunisians headed to polls to take part in the second round of parliamentary elections on Sunday, as all eyes are on the turnout amid deepening economic woes. A total of 262 candidates competed for 131 seats in the new legislature, a body largely stripped of its powers following President Kais Saied’s dramatic power grab. The voting stations for the run-offs opened after the first round of polling drew only an 11 percent turnout. Only 30 candidates, out of the total who wanted to fill the 161-member parliament, gained enough votes in the initial round last month. Critics of the president blamed the low turnout on the sweeping political changes brought about since Kais Saied rose to power. Saied has decreed the new, mostly powerless, parliament as part of a reconfigured presidential system that he introduced after shutting down the previous parliament in 2021 and assuming broad control over the state. His critics accuse him of seeking to dismantle the democratic system enacted after Tunisia’s 2011 revolution, which sparked the Arab Spring in turn.

PRAGUE (AP) – Petr Pavel, a retired army general, decisively defeated billionaire Andrej Babis in a runoff vote to become the Czech Republic’s new president. Pavel, 61, will succeed controversially-courting Milos Zeman in the largely ceremonial but prestigious post. With all the ballots counted by the Czech Statistics Office, Pavel had 58.3% of the vote compared with 42.7% for Babis. Turnout was just over 70%, a record high for a presidential vote. “We can have different views of a number of issues, but that doesn’t mean we’re enemies,” Pavel said in a message to voters who cast ballots for Babis after what was considered a nasty presidential campaign period. “We have to learn how to communicate with each other.” Babis conceded defeat and congratulated Pavel on his victory. He called on his supporters “to accept that I’ve lost and accept we have a new president.”

New Zealand Roiled by Flash Floods, Landslides

AUCKLAND (Reuters) – New Zealand’s death toll from heavy rain rose to four on Sunday as flash floods and landslides on the north island continued for a third day.

Battered since Friday, Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city, remained under a state of emergency. The nation’s weather forecaster, MetService, warned of more severe weather on Sunday and Monday for the north island. Intense rainfall could also cause surface and flash flooding, it said.

“We know that there is potential for more adverse weather tonight,” Auckland Emergency Management controller Rachel Kelleher told reporters.

The emergency covers large swaths of the north island, with Waitomo District about 220 km (140 miles) from Auckland, declaring a state of emergency late on Saturday.

A man missing after being swept away on Friday in Onewhero, a rural village about 70 km (40 miles) south of Auckland, was confirmed dead, police said.

“The most horrific part of it is that we’ve lost lives,” Deputy Prime Minister Carmel Sepuloni said in Auckland, a city of 1.6 million.

Climate change is causing episodes of heavy rainfall to become more



Vehicles are stranded by flood water in Auckland, Saturday, Jan 28, 2023.

common and more intense in New Zealand, though the impact varies by region. Climate Change Minister James Shaw noted the link to climate change on Saturday when he tweeted his support for those affected by flooding.

Police said on Sunday they were assisting with traffic management and road closures in Waitomo District after heavy rainfall “caused numerous slips, flooding and damage to roads”.

In nearby Bay of Plenty there was also “widespread flooding”, police said, as well as a landslide that had knocked down a house and was

threatening neighboring properties. Thousands of properties remained without power, while hundreds were without water, authorities said.

Prime Minister Chris Hipkins, less than a week in office, flew by helicopter over Auckland on Saturday and toured flood-hit homes. He described the flood impact in the city as “unprecedented” in recent memory.

People made more than 2,000 calls for assistance and 70 evacuations around Auckland - the nation’s largest city - due to the inundation, the New Zealand Herald reported Saturday.

Peru’s Political Crisis Continues, Protester Dies in Lima

LIMA (Reuters) – One more protester in Peru’s capital Lima has died and others were hospitalized as national clashes between protesters and police continued in the eighth week of the South American country’s political crisis.

The death of Victor Santisteban Yacsavilca, 55, brings to 58 the nationwide toll in the protests that began in early December after the impeachment and arrest of President Pedro Castillo.

Initially focused in Peru’s rural, mountainous south, protests have gained steam in the capital in recent weeks. Saturday’s protests were mostly in Lima and the southern Cusco region, Peru’s ombudsman said in a statement.

Santisteban had suffered a severe head injury, the national health insurance agency said in a statement.

Some protests escalated as demonstrators armed with rocks and makeshift shields clashed with police, who deployed gas and rubber bullets.

Peru’s ombudsman condemned reports of attacks against journalists covering the protests.

President Dina Boluarte expressed regret early on Saturday after Congress refused to speed up the timeline for a presidential election amid the unrest, her office said.

Lawmakers had given an initial green light to moving elections from 2026 to 2024, but on Friday voted down proposals hold the election this year.

Boluarte has repeatedly backed moving up elections as she struggles to quell the protests calling for her resignation. A motion to move elections up to April 2024 passed one vote and has a final vote in February. Congress will continue debate on Monday.

On Friday Boluarte said an election could happen this year. “We urge lawmakers to put down their partisan and group interests and put the interest of Peru first. Our citizens promptly await a clear response that will pave a way out of the political crisis and build social peace,” Boluarte’s office said on Twitter.

Boluarte, who took office after Castillo’s removal, has maintained she will stay on as president until elections are held.