

*Protesters demand justice before former police officer goes on trial in George Floyd's death*

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Minneapolis, March 7 (RHC)-- Protesters have staged a rally in front of the Minnesota governor's mansion to demand justice days before a former Minneapolis officer goes on trial in the death of African American George Floyd.

Many of the roughly 150 people who demonstrated in Minnesota on Saturday were family members of victims of police brutality. The protest was organized by Families Supporting Families Against Police Violence, a coalition of families who have lost loved ones in police confrontations.

Speakers in the event demanded that other cases of fatal police encounters be reopened and examined in light of Floyd's death. Several other protest rallies have been organized in cities around the United States ahead of the trial of Derek Chauvin, charged with second-degree murder and manslaughter in Floyd's death.

Activists have planned a "We Demand Justice for George Floyd" rally in Pensacola, Florida, on Sunday, according to a Facebook event post. More solidarity rallies have been planned around the country on Monday.

Floyd died on May 25 last year after Chauvin pressed his knee against his neck as he was being held face-down on the ground in handcuffs. Floyd was arrested by Minneapolis police after a grocery store employee reported that he had allegedly used a fake \$20 bill to buy cigarettes.

Body-camera footage provided by prosecutors show Chauvin held his knee on Floyd's neck for about nine minutes, even after he had stopped moving. Floyd was later pronounced dead at a hospital.

Jury selection in Chauvin's trial is secluded to begin Monday. On Friday, the Minnesota appeals court ordered the trial judge to reconsider adding a third-degree murder charge against the officer, a development that could delay the start of proceedings.

Heavy security measures, including barricades and fencing around the courthouse, have been put in place ahead of the trial. Defense attorneys for Chauvin claim he followed standard police procedure and allege that Floyd had died in custody because he had recently injected fentanyl, an opioid.

Two autopsies ? one conducted by county officials and the other by independent pathologists commissioned by Floyd's family ? have established homicide as the cause of Floyd's death.

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