

Memphis disbands police unit linked to Tyre Nichols's beating



A protestor holds a sign following the release of videos showing Memphis police officers beating Tyre Nichols, in New York City, US, January 28, 2023 [David Dee Delgado/ Reuters]

Memphis, January 30 (RHC)-- The city of Memphis in the United States has disbanded a police unit that included five officers charged with the fatal beating of Tyre Nichols, a Black motorist. Cerelyn 'CJ' Davis, the Memphis police chief, announced the move over the weekend, citing a "cloud of dishonour."

Davis said in a statement it was imperative that the police “take proactive steps in the healing process” and that it was in “the best interest of all to permanently deactivate the Scorpion unit.” She said she made the decision after speaking with members of Nichols’s family, community leaders and other officers.

Her announcement came a day after harrowing videos emerged of the police beating Nichols. It showed the 29-year-old Black man repeatedly screaming “Mom!” as officers kicked, punched and struck him with a baton in his mother’s neighbourhood after a January 7 traffic stop. He was hospitalised and died of his injuries three days later.

Five Black officers involved in the beating were charged on Thursday with murder, assault, kidnapping and other charges. All have been dismissed from the department.

Protesters marching through downtown Memphis cheered when they heard the unit had been dissolved. One protester said over a bullhorn that “the unit that killed Tyre has been permanently disbanded”.

The unit is composed of three teams of about 30 officers whose stated aim is to target violent offenders in areas beset by high crime.

It had been inactive since Nichols’s January 7 arrest and subsequent beating. “We must keep in mind that this is just the next step on this journey for justice and accountability, as clearly this misconduct is not restricted to these specialty units. It extends so much further,” they said.

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