

U.S. cities on alert as anti-racism protests rage ahead of Chauvin murder trial verdict

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Minneapolis, April 20 (RHC)-- U.S. anti-racism protesters have rallied in Minneapolis as the murder trial of former police officer Derek Chauvin was taking place. The protesters chanted "guilty" as they marched through the Minnesota city, carrying banners reading: "Justice for George Floyd. The World is watching."

On Monday, the jury went into deliberations to determine whether Chauvin is guilty of killing African American George Floyd by kneeling on his neck for almost 9 minutes last May. Deliberations resumed on Tuesday. Chauvin has pleaded not guilty to second-degree murder, third-degree "depraved mind" murder and second-degree manslaughter.

Minneapolis and state officials have ramped up security precautions in the city, in particular around the tower in which the courtroom sits. The tower is ringed by barbed wire and armed soldiers from the National Guard.

Civil rights activist Jesse Jackson joined the Minneapolis demonstrations on Monday, saying: "Tomorrow, even if we win. It's relief, not victory. They're still killing our people."

For the second-degree murder charge, all 12 jurors will have to agree that prosecutors proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Chauvin committed a felony that was a substantial cause in Floyd's death. They do not have to find that Chauvin intended to kill Floyd, according to U.S. media. That crime carries a punishment of up to 40 years in prison.

Nightly protests have been held in the Minneapolis suburb since the police shooting of 20-year-old Daunte Wright after a routine traffic stop.

In Washington DC, the National Guard said it was activating about 250 personnel to help police with street closures in the city ahead of the verdict. Thousands of people protested Floyd's death last June.

New York City police had also been preparing for the Chauvin trial verdict and doing "a lot of work" engaging with local leaders, clergy and community organizations.

"We're just asking anyone that may come out to voice their concern over this trial...do it peacefully, no property damage and we'll get through it together," New York City Police Commissioner Dermot Shea said.

Illinois was also activating 125 personnel from the state's National Guard to support the city's police starting Tuesday.

In Chicago, which has seen protests in recent days after the city released graphic body-camera video from the fatal police shooting of 13-year-old Black teenager, Adam Toledo, police department said it deployed additional resources throughout the city. Chicago businesses have boarded up windows in anticipation of possible unrest.

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