

Protests in U.S. over yet another murder of Black man by police

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Lawyer Bobby DiCello holds up a photograph of Jayland Walker, who was fatally shot by police in Akron, Ohio. He stands with family of the victim. [File: Jeff Lange/USA Today Network via Reuters]

Akron, July 3 (RHC)-- Protesters are demanding justice after police killed a Black man in the U.S. state of Ohio, with a lawyer representing the family of Jayland Walker saying the 25-year-old had been shot when

his back was turned to police during the incident in the city of Akron. According to reports, the officers involved in Walker's killing have been placed on administrative leave pending an investigation.

Lawyer Bobby DiCello told the Akron Beacon Journal that it is believed police fired as many as 90 shots at Walker, with his office's investigation suggesting Walker suffered "60 to 80 wounds", although he noted a single bullet can cause multiple wounds.

The lawyer, who said he had reviewed the body camera footage of the killing prior to its planned release, said his team had not seen any evidence that Walker fired at the officers.

Authorities have said Walker fled an early morning traffic stop and that officers reported a gun being fired from Walker's vehicle, from which he ran before he was fatally shot in a nearby parking lot.

"He is just in a down sprint when he is dropped by I think the count is more than 90 shots," DiCello told the newspaper. "Now how many of those land, according to our investigation right now, we're getting details that suggest 60 to 80 wounds."

A police statement released after the incident maintained "actions by the suspect caused the officers to perceive he posed a deadly threat to them."

The death sparked small protests in Akron, with many likening the incident to several high-profile police killings of Black people in the U.S. in recent years. The national anger reached a fever pitch in 2020 following the police killing of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man in Minneapolis, Minnesota. One officer has since been convicted of murder in that incident and three others were convicted of violating Floyd's civil rights.

Speaking to reporters over the weekend, Walker's aunt, Lajuana Walker-Dawkins, told reporters: "Jayland was a sweet young man, he never caused any trouble."

During a protest on Saturday, Jazzimine Beasley, the sister of Walker's fiancée who died in a car crash last month, called for accountability. "This was my brother," she told the Beacon Journal. "I'm here to get justice. I'm just so angry."

Rodderick Pounds Sr, the pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Akron, said he had also been permitted to view body camera footage of the killing prior to its public release and said it did not show Walker posing a threat to the officers before he was shot. He called the video "shocking" and said the killing was like a "massacre." "It's barbaric," Pounds said in an interview with local television station WEWS-TV.

Local elected officials have called for a federal investigation into the killing.

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