

## The police lynching of George Floyd in Minneapolis has sparked a massive international wave of rage and revulsion.

**G**eorge Floyd's murder was just the latest in an unrelenting killing spree of black people by racist cops. On Sunday 7 June, Black Lives Matter called a protest of thousands of mainly black Londoners outside the US embassy in Battersea, London to protest against racist police and state violence. Supporters of Julian Assange attended this massive protest to show solidarity and inform people about the importance of his case to the common struggle against imperialism, state repression and war

I arrived at the US embassy at 2pm with Inminds Human Rights Group, where we hoisted Palestinian flags to highlight the common struggle against racism by the Palestinian people and black people. Though facing a life and death struggle themselves, Palestinians have demonstrated in support of Black Lives Matter and explicitly linked their own struggle to others fighting racism and imperialism.

After two hours, the protest moved off in a march to Downing Street and on the way I caught up with three Assange supporters as it passed Victoria Station. When we arrived at Parliament Square, they began putting up Free Assange posters and flyers on the railings around the Houses of Parliament, which attracted quite a bit of interest from demonstrators, who asked about the latest on Julian's case.

As I walked around the demo at Downing Street taking pictures, I became aware that the police presence was growing and they were becoming increasingly aggressive towards the peaceful. A reassuring sight was the eight-strong team of legal observers who were mingling with protestors and handing out arrest advice cards, giving advice and answering questions. The previous day, police horses had been used against protestors knocking over and injuring people.

At around 9pm a cordon of riot

Initially some young people tried to walk through the cordon but were beaten with riot shields. Everyone became resigned to the fact that we weren't going anywhere for quite some time. A sound system inside the kettle began playing loud music and people joined in singing and dancing, while the team of legal observers called groups of protestors together to inform them of their legal rights. It is not a legal obligation to give your personal details as a condition for release from the kettle.

At about 11pm, an unmarked white van with a mounted camera turned up just outside the kettle. Immediately the legal observers informed us that this camera van was there to take facial recognition photos as we were released from the kettle. To counter this protestors remained masked up when they are released from the kettle. All of this time a police helicopter hovered above the kettle. People started to be released from the kettle at about 11.45pm and were frogmarched one at a time by two cops either side to the northern end of Westminster Bridge where we were told to leave Westminster and that should we return, we would be arrested. I was released at midnight.

I have since read a statement about Sunday night's kettle from the civil rights group Netpol:

"On Sunday evening, legal observers witnessed the police only allowing protesters (including some minors as young as 12) to leave the kettles in ones and twos into a sterile area outside of the police lines, so that officers could film each individual. Face masks were pulled down to make sure faces were captured.

Officers also demanded people give their names and addresses under another anti-social behaviour power, section 50 of the Police Reform Act – we believe there was at least one arrest for refusing to comply with this.

We also had reports that officers were saying that "Mengesha rights do not apply tonight". This is a reference to a High Court ruling in 2013 that police powers to prevent a breach of the peace cannot be used for other purposes such as intelligence gathering."

Kettling protestors is in effect a violation of the right to protest. It is just one of the oppressive tactics used by the forces of the state to prevent protest and to silence dissent.



George Floyd mural on the separation wall by Palestinian artist Taqi Spateen

It should be noted that thousands of US police officers and commanders – including those in Minneapolis – have received training in restraint techniques from Israeli forces.

We were welcomed by the demonstrators many of whom wanted to have Inminds contact details and some asked to have their photos taken alongside the Palestinian flags.

Virtually everyone was carrying a home-made placard and venting their fury at continuing worldwide racism with a barrage of chants. A common slogan among the placards was "The UK is Not Innocent" and many held placards with the names of UK victims of British police racism who have died in police custody over the years.

police suddenly filed out into the road in formation stretching the full width of Whitehall. There was very little reaction from the crowds until those riot cops began beating their riot shields with their truncheons (a tactic they often use to spread fear and alarm) and began surging towards the demonstrators at which point people began to retreat away from them. I was standing on a high wall at this point taking photos when another phalanx of riot cops suddenly rushed out of a side street on the other side of the assembled protestors and it dawned on everyone that they were forming a kettle. Some tried to rush into the gap before they were closed off, but by now it was too late and hundreds of us became sealed in.