

Baltimore Goes from Violence to Tension after Night of Looting

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After a night of looting and cars and buildings being set on fire, the state of emergency decreed in the city with the consequent deployment of an extra 5,000 police and around 1,000 members of the National Guard has brought a return of calm, though no one can be certain what will happen tonight.

Baltimore Police Department Capt. John Kowalczyk said Tuesday that the disturbances left a total of 20 cops injured, with one in critical condition from carrying out his responsibilities in a building that went up in flames. Meanwhile 25 new arrests have been made during the day.

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake declared a 10 p.m.-5 a.m. curfew starting Tuesday.

After days of peaceful protests for the death of Freddie Gray, 25, who suffered a severed spine in the course of his April 12 arrest and died a week later, Monday got violent after his funeral when hundreds of teens started throwing rocks, bricks and bottles at the cops.

The grave disturbances on Monday left 236 people under arrest, including 34 minors, while 144 cars and 15 buildings were burned.

Under such circumstances, none could avoid making comparisons with what happened last August 2014 in Ferguson, Missouri, where unarmed black teenager Michael Brown was fatally shot by a white police officer, though authorities in Baltimore have not disclosed the race of any of the six officers involved in Gray's arrest.

Brown's killing was followed by several additional deaths of unarmed blacks at the hands of white police, bringing greater attention to the question of how law enforcement personnel treat African Americans.

"We have seen too many instances of what appears to be police officers interacting with individuals – primarily African American, often poor – in ways that have raised troubling questions," President Barack Obama said Tuesday about the situation in Baltimore.

"What I'd say is this has been a slow-rolling crisis. This has been going on for a long time. This is not new, and we shouldn't pretend that it's new," he said in response to a question during a joint press conference with visiting Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Nonetheless, the president condemned Monday night's criminal acts.

"There's no excuse for the kind of violence that we saw yesterday," he said.

"The violence that happened yesterday distracted from the fact that you had seen multiple days of peaceful protests that were focused on entirely legitimate concerns of these communities in Baltimore, led by clergy and community leaders," Obama said.

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