

Second New York Cop Funeral Provides Platform to Muzzle Opposition

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Sunday's funeral for New York City Police Officer Wenjian Liu marked the continuation of a political counterattack aimed at rendering illegitimate and even outright criminal the growing resistance to police violence.

Similar to last week's ceremony for Rafael Ramos, who was gunned down alongside Liu on December 20, what occurred over the weekend was a political operation coordinated by high-ranking officials from all levels of government. Liu was eulogized not only by family members, but also by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, Police Commissioner Bill Bratton, and FBI Director James Comey. New York Senator Chuck Schumer, Governor Andrew Cuomo and dozens more politicians made appearances either at the funeral Sunday or the wake Saturday.

Thousands of cops from around the country traveled to Brooklyn to attend the proceedings. Together with NYPD officers they filled the cordoned-off streets for blocks outside the funeral home. Giant projection screens broadcast the proceedings to the cops assembled outside. Cable news channels carried the event live.

The massive police turnout was about far more than the death of officer Liu. In the two weeks since the shooting, the entire political establishment has been mobilized to intimidate and silence any opposition to police violence.

Tens of thousands took to the streets over the past month and a half as outrage spiked following the decisions not to indict officers in the killings of Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. While Garner and Brown were the most prominent cases, the epidemic of police violence has continued unabated. On Friday, for example, a medical examiner's report attributed the November death of Tanisha Anderson while in Cleveland police custody to physical restraint by the police.

The eulogies Sunday sought to virtually deify the NYPD and other police forces, presenting them as heroic defenders of freedom who alone stand between order and anarchy. Bratton invoked the terrorist attacks on September 11 during his remarks, saying that "it changed so many things for so many of us." He added, "Without public safety it is not possible to have free government. Everything starts with public safety, it starts with us."

Casting the deaths of the two NYPD cops at the hands of a mentally disturbed individual as part of a wave of anti-police violence, FBI Director Comey referenced the 115 police officers killed in the line of duty nationwide this past year, calling it "a shocking increase" from 2013. This is a gross and politically motivated distortion. The figure is just four more than in

2013—which recorded the lowest number of fatalities in 54 years—and considerably less than the 127 killed in 2012, which represented a significant decline from the previous year. The rate of on-the-job fatalities for cops is considerably lower than that for workers in construction, agriculture and a number of other industrial sectors, and is attributable in large measure to traffic accidents and heart attacks.

“I cannot explain evil. I will not even try,” Comey said. The FBI keeps no database on civilians killed by police officers. However the web site killedbypolice.net documented 1,100 people who died at the hands of US police since January 1, 2014.

Comey’s appearance at the funeral carries special weight. In sending the chief of the FBI, an agency with a staggering history of abuse and political repression, the Obama administration is signaling its direct involvement in the effort to assert unchallengeable police powers. Under the guise of the war on terror, the FBI continues to work closely with the NYPD and other local law enforcement agencies, including during the recent protests against police violence.

The threat of unrestrained police power has begun to reveal itself in New York since the killing of Liu and Ramos. As de Blasio began to speak Sunday, a large contingent of officers once again turned their backs, protesting the mayor’s statements of vague sympathy for those outraged by unchecked police brutality. The action came in defiance of a call by Bratton, who has sought to mediate the divide between de Blasio and the police force. “I issue no mandates, and I make no threats of discipline, but I remind you that when you don the uniform of this department, you are bound by the tradition, honor and decency that go with it,” Bratton wrote in a statement to police officers Friday.

Together with incendiary statements by police union leaders, a slowdown in police activity and other expressions of disobedience, the actions represent an unprecedented challenge to civilian authority over the police.

Meanwhile, the wave of arrests for alleged threats to police officers around the country has shown no signs of slowing. In New York alone, at least 21 people have been arrested, several of whom were accused only of posting to social media sites.

The NYPD is also continuing a roundup of anti-police violence protesters accused of assaulting police officers on the Brooklyn Bridge. A fifth man was taken into custody last week charged with assault, resisting arrest and obstructing governmental administration. Detectives reportedly traced DNA from a black mask found on the bridge to the 29-year-old graduate student, Jarrod Shanahan.

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