

US authorities empanel grand jury into the death of black man Daniel Prude by Rochester Police: US authorities are forming a grand jury to investigate the death of Daniel Prude, a black man who died after Rochester police officers put a hood on him and pinned him to the ground to restrain him.

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FULL TEXT

US authorities have moved to form a grand jury to investigate the death of Daniel Prude, a black man who died after Rochester police officers put a hood on him & pinned him to the ground to restrain him.

"The Prude family & the Rochester community have been through great pain & anguish," New York Attorney-General Letitia James said in a statement.

"My office will immediately move to empanel a grand jury as part of our exhaustive investigation into this matter."

Rochester, a city of 200,000 people in the north-west corner of the State of New York, erupted with protests this week after the Prude family released body camera footage from the arrest of Daniel Prude in March.

The footage shows a group of officers putting a mesh hood over Prude's head — apparently to prevent his spit from possibly transmitting the novel coronavirus — as he kneels naked & restrained on the street.

The video footage also shows officers forcing Prude's face down on the ground.

Prude can be heard shouting, "Take this ... off my face!" & "You're trying to kill me!" in response to the hood.

Officers are heard saying "Calm down" & "stop spitting".

He died a week later at the hospital.

Seven police officers have been suspended over the arrest.

'It is a trying time in Rochester'

The medical examiner ruled his death a homicide caused by "complications of asphyxia in the setting of physical restraint", with intoxication by the drug PCP a contributing factor.

Rochester officials have faced questions over why the officers were not disciplined until the videotape became public five months later.

On Friday local time, the Rochester police union chief defended the officers, saying they followed their training in responding to Prude, who was having a psychotic episode.

But advocates for reform said Prude's death & the actions of seven now-suspended Rochester police officers demonstrated how police are ill-equipped to deal with people suffering mental problems.

Having police respond can be a "recipe for disaster", The National Alliance on Mental Illness said.

Prude's death "is yet another harrowing tragedy, but a story not unfamiliar to us", the advocacy group said.

"People in crisis deserve help, not handcuffs."

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo & Rochester Mayor Lovely Warren both issued statements welcoming the grand jury.

A spokeswoman for the Rochester Police Department declined to comment.

"I thank Attorney-General James for taking this action because it is a trying time in Rochester," Ms Warren said.

Protests are expected again in Rochester after nearly 1,000 demonstrators marched at the location of his arrest on

Friday night local time.

Reuters/AP

DETAILS

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