

California Police Brace for More Riots After Trayvon Martin Verdict

Police and civic leaders appealed for calm but braced for more unrest on Tuesday after nearly two dozen protesters were arrested in Los Angeles and Oakland in a second night of unrest sparked by the not-guilty verdict in the shooting of Trayvon Martin.

Los Angeles police said the disturbances involved about 150 people who broke off from an otherwise peaceful prayer vigil for Martin, the unarmed black teenager who was killed last year by a neighborhood watch volunteer in Florida.

The white-Hispanic man who shot Martin, George Zimmerman, was found not guilty of murder and manslaughter on Saturday after a three-week trial. The verdict in the racially charged case has stirred demonstrations across the country.

In the predominantly black Crenshaw District of Los Angeles, vandals set trash on fire, smashed windows and assaulted a television news crew during several hours of unrest on Monday night.

Fourteen people were arrested, most of them for failing to disperse, police said. One person was arrested during similar outbursts on Sunday night.

In Oakland, across the bay from San Francisco, about 250 protesters swarmed downtown streets on Monday night, vandalizing cars and businesses and scrawling graffiti. Nine people were arrested.

No serious injuries were reported in either city. But officials called for demonstrators to keep rallies peaceful.

"The trial that we saw in Florida has ignited passions, but we have to make sure that it will not ignite this city," Mayor Eric Garcetti told a late-night news conference.

Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck, appearing with the mayor, warned that officers would take "a much stricter posture in the way that we deal with people taking the streets" around Crenshaw and urged parents to keep children away from protests.

Show of Force

Police Commander Andrew Smith said minor infractions tolerated by police on Sunday and Monday, such as blocking traffic, would not be overlooked on Tuesday.

The LAPD's show of force would be "significantly above" the 300 to 350 officers who were on the scene Monday night, he said, adding: "The message is very clear: We expect everyone to act in a lawful manner."

A statement signed by Oakland Mayor Jean Quan and other city officials called the death of Trayvon Martin "a tragic event felt throughout the community."

"We understand the verdict announcement is an emotional one. We are committed to supporting peaceful assembly and freedom of speech," it added.

Civic leaders planned to deploy a team of "peace monitors" on street corners, said community activist Earl Ofari Hutchinson.

He said opportunism from trouble-makers seeking to exploit the situation was a factor on Monday, but the Zimmerman acquittal was also the latest flashpoint for pent-up anger, frustration and a sense of disconnect within the community.

"Many are angry over the (Zimmerman verdict); they think it was unjust," he said.

In San Francisco, a group that organized protests of the

Zimmerman acquittal in various cities was planning a demonstration on Tuesday to mark the second anniversary of another fatal shooting with racial overtones, the killing of a black bus passenger by police after he failed to pay his fare.

The group, Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, threatened to shut down San Francisco's MUNI bus service on Tuesday afternoon in an act of civil disobedience. City transit authorities reported that two bus lines were blocked by protesters during the late-afternoon rush hour but were later cleared.

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