

State prosecutors decline to press charges against western Illinois police in murder of four-year-old

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State prosecutors in western Illinois have declined to press charges against Macomb police officers who shot and killed four-year-old Terrell Miller and Anthony T. George on March 16 while responding to a domestic violence call. Repeated delays and official silence on the part of state and local police and prosecutors, along with the absence of body camera footage or other evidence, gives all the appearance of an official cover up carried out with the assistance of a compliant media.

According to the *Peoria Journal Star*, police officers from the Macomb Police Department entered the home of Keianna Miller, claiming to see blood in the common area and hear screaming coming from one of the apartments. Upon entering, Miller was found with multiple stab wounds. George, apparently holding a knife, left the room and returned holding the knife to the throat of Miller's four-year-old son, Terrell.

Police claim George refused to comply with orders to drop the weapon, and a Macomb police officer fired one shot, killing both George and Terrell Miller. No explanation has been given why police felt it necessary to open fire given the extreme danger posed to the young boy.

Clearly understanding the explosive political implications of the shooting, Macomb police immediately contacted the Illinois State Police (ISP) to investigate in a bid to clear the officers of wrongdoing. The ISP conducted their investigation, gathering evidence, including police body camera footage, that has still not been released to the public.

Local county state's attorney Matt Kwacala contacted the Special Prosecution Unit of the Illinois State's Attorneys Appellate Prosecutor, leading to the

appointment of Jonathan H. Barnard, former state's attorney in a different county, as special prosecutor for the case. Kwacala told the *Journal Star* that because his office works so closely with Macomb police, he wanted to remove the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Of course, by appointing a former prosecutor, Kwacala ensured the investigation would be carried out by someone professionally disposed toward police. In a letter to Kwacala on July 8, Barnard said that after reviewing statutes, case law and use-of force protocols, "I find that there is no basis for any criminal action or prosecution that is supportable under the facts of this case against any of the officers involved in this tragic incident."

Though the *Journal Star* does not bother to explain why the contents of this letter went unreported from July 8 until July 23, it fits in with a long-standing pattern of delays and cover-ups of information and evidence in cases of police killings. It frequently happens that initially suppressed evidence reveals the extreme brutality and criminal behavior of the police and shows initial police explanations of the shooting to be self-serving lies and fabrications.

The shooting of Terrell Miller and Anthony George must have been particularly shocking, as Macomb police chief Jeff Hamer told WIUM that the department was going to carry out its own internal investigation into the incident, even after the release of Barnard's letter. Hamer said, "We have a deadly force review policy. That's to make sure that there's no failures of policy, failures of training, or anything like that."

Hamer did not commit to releasing the full body cam footage, which he claimed to have reviewed several times, or even the names of the police officers

involved. He said, “What I do intend to do is—as soon as I can—release some video and the results of the internal (review), although I don’t want to prescribe a timeline to this. I’ve been working on this since March and trying to be time-efficient in working on it as much as I can.”

The special prosecutor’s letter to Kwacala came only two days after the release of body camera footage depicting the brutal police execution of Sonya Massey in Springfield, the state capital. The delay in the release of the letter was certainly helpful to the police in allowing them to separate the two shootings in the public consciousness.

Macomb is a small, largely working class city of about 15,000 located southwest of Peoria. Home to Western Illinois University (WIU), the city has a median household income of just under \$26,000 and a per capita income of \$13,470. Just over 29 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, including 12.2 percent of families.

According to an account in the Daily Beast, Keianna Miller told the Illinois Democratic Women’s group at a Black Lives Matter event in 2020 that when she was pregnant in 2019, a Macomb police officer asked whether the baby was going to be a boy or a girl. After she responded, he said, “I can’t wait to arrest your son.”

In a video taken after Terrell was born, Miller said “Before I even had my son, I’ve been having this recurring dream that the police runs into my house and kills me and my son. Some days, I wish I was a whole other color to get a better chance at life... I don’t want to be here in Macomb. I don’t even want to be here in the state because of how corrupt it is.”

Illinois’ billionaire Democratic governor J.B. Pritzker, reportedly under consideration for US vice president on a ticket with former prosecutor Kamala Harris, has so far said nothing about the incident, even though much of the investigation has been carried out by the ISP, which is under the governor’s office. The continued wave of brutal killings in the state exposes the fraud of the police and criminal justice “reform” bill passed in 2021 with Pritzker’s signature.

As the WSWS made clear in its July 23 perspective,

and mayhem lies not in nonexistent reforms but in the abolition of the police through the united political mobilization of the working class to overturn the capitalist system and end social inequality through the establishment of socialism.



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The solution to this unending wave of murder