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The siege of Minneapolis: testimonies from the front lines

written by Melinda Butterfield
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Community members confront armed ICE, DHS and CPB cops after they shot a

person in the leg on Jan. 17, 2026. Photo: Chris Juhn

In an effort to provide readers with a clearer picture of events in Minneapolis, Struggle-La Lucha has spoken to local activists and community members and gathered testimonies from other participants in the local response to Trump-ICE terror. These voices are being ignored, minimized or distorted by the corporate media.

For weeks and months prior to the new year, activists in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area had been preparing for a full-scale invasion by federal agents – particularly after President Donald Trump leaned into attacks on the Somali immigrant community. The area is home to the country's largest Somali diaspora and to Rep. Ilhan Omar, a frequent lightning rod for white supremacists.

But the murder of Renee Nicole Good by ICE agent Jonathan Ross on Jan. 7 ignited a mass response to ICE repression throughout the city. Good, a 37-year-old white woman and U.S. citizen, together with her wife Becca Good, were acting as observers documenting an ICE raid.

Multiple videos of Ross's brutal killing of Good provide ample proof of the vicious misogyny, anti-lesbian and anti-queer hate that fueled the murder.

"The queer community is furious," local activist Meredith Aby-Keirstead told Struggle-La Lucha. "Not only was Renee Good murdered and labeled a 'domestic terrorist' by the Trump administration, but now the Justice Department is investigating Renee's wife Becca, when in reality they should go after the ICE murderer instead."

But that anger isn't limited to LGBTQIA+ people, said Aby-Keirstead, an organizer with the Anti-War Committee. "Minneapolis is outraged at Good's murder. Many communities are angry at how ICE is tearing our city apart. We had over 100,000

people in the streets on Saturday [Jan. 10].”

Children under siege

P, a young teacher, who asked SLL to remain anonymous, said: “Right away at school today one of my students told me he’s afraid of ICE. These are K-2 students with developmental delays.

“He said three men in vests came to his house over the weekend. He said his older brother was cursing at them and his mother told him to hide.

“I asked him if he wants a whistle to keep in his bag, so he can blow it if he feels scared and he needs to call for help, and he said yes.”

The teacher continued: “I think it’s very odd that the news articles about the closing of Minneapolis schools are connecting it only to the shooting of Renee Good and not the coincidental fact that within hours ICE assaulted children going home from school at Roosevelt High School.

“While it’s true that the shooting did cause an elementary school to go into lockdown, the reason they’re allowing students to learn from home until Feb. 12 is because ICE is kidnapping, assaulting, and tear gassing children as they leave school.”

E, a parent and coordinator of an all-volunteer bookstore, posted on social media: “I really want people without Minneapolis connections to understand. You might’ve heard that Minneapolis public schools went hybrid because so many families are in hiding. Well, a coworker just told me that today, during his kid’s hybrid class, another kid’s apartment building was raided on screen.

“Everyone has stories like this.”

‘Money for names’

Legal observer Brandon Siguenza was violently detained by ICE Jan. 11 and held at the Whipple Federal Building in downtown Minneapolis. Siguenza made a statement shared on social media and was also interviewed by local television station KARE-11.

“They finally told me that they could offer undocumented family members of mine legal protection if I have any… or money, in exchange for giving them the names of protest organizers, or undocumented persons. I was shocked, and told them no.”

Hwa Jeong Kim, vice president of the St. Paul City Council, posted a video for residents of her district, stating: “Before 9:30 this morning ICE already kidnapped someone off the streets of my ward. We have first-hand accounts of neighbors reporting ICE showing up at their homes, asking people to identify pictures …

“They ask them, ‘Do you know any of your Hmong neighbors?’ They even go so far as asking, ‘Do you know any Asian people in your neighborhood?’ And they said no.

“This going door-to-door to random homes is a clear escalation. I don’t want to be the person to say that it’s not safe to go outside today, but folks really need to decide for themselves how safe they feel out in their neighborhoods.

“And still there are community patrols keeping an eye out for you. There are caring neighbors who want to deliver groceries to you and provide mutual aid. Please stay safe.”

Federal agents flooded the streets of Minneapolis with tear gas and other chemicals on Jan. 17, 2026. Photo: Chris Juhn

‘Our movements are connected’

Sarah Martin is an organizer of Women Against Military Madness (WAMM), which started in the 1980s to oppose U.S.-funded wars in Latin America. Martin told SLL, "WAMM and the anti-war movement in Minneapolis understand that all our movements are connected and that we are fighting the same enemy: U.S. imperialism.

"In the case of ICE, it's about the connections. That monstrosity has connections to the IOF [Israel Occupation Forces] through training and reports of direct involvement. The wars the U.S. perpetrates in Latin America and beyond – whether military or sanctions or regime changes – have forced people out of their homelands and to migrate here.

"It is unjust and so cruel," said Martin. "Our government makes life unbearable for people in their countries, they feel they have no choice but to leave, and then they make it just as miserable for them here. So of course, we respond when ICE is terrorizing a neighborhood."

Martin added: "For at least 10 years WAMM has held a weekly bannering at the Whipple Federal Building, which holds the immigration court and from which immigrants are deported. The bannering happens at 7:30 a.m., when vans holding deportees go by. Now it's the site of ICE agents staging every morning."

Chris Juhn is a photojournalist who covers many protests in Minneapolis, including during the 2020 uprising after the police murder of George Floyd.

On the night of Jan. 14, Juhn was documenting the federal agents' attack on protesters and legal observers after ICE shot a person in the leg. He photographed the feds unleashing an unidentified green gas not seen at previous protests.

"That was the most tear gas I've ever experienced in my life," Juhn recalled. "I must've been hit with at least five rounds of tear gas, some incredibly thick. Had

some shrapnel from flashbangs fly around me. When you see a flaming ball shooting sparks fly by your head, it's terrifying.

"I was next to a crowd that was completely peaceful. Next thing, they're tossing tear gas and flash bangs at everyone without warning. A car nearly hit me as everyone scrambled.

"The Minneapolis PD seemed useless. I had my editor tell me to clear out."

Somali community patrols

The Intercept published a report on ICE watch patrols organized by Somalis to keep their community safe.

Those participating are mainly people with U.S. citizenship, explained Abdi Rahman, a founder of the West Bank neighborhood patrol. "The non-citizens have stopped stepping out entirely. We buy groceries for them and drop them off at their homes."

"The armed men and women, with their faces covered, roaming our streets and profiling us – we thought we had left all that behind, but now this moment in America is reminding us again of the Somali civil war," said Imam Yusuf Abdulle of the Islamic Association of North America.

"But we are fighting. We didn't come this far, make our lives here, to again be targeted and abused like this."

"We fled a civil war," community activist Mahmoud Hasan said. "We are more resilient than they think."