

WORLD

Demonstrators have no leader, so city blockade hard to resolve

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Days after hundreds of protesters occupied the city area in Capitol Hill and established the “Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone”, or CHAZ, in Seattle, the city and the Seattle Police Department still have no plan or deadline for taking it back.

CHAZ, a six-block area around the police department’ east precinct, has been in community control since Tuesday, when Seattle Police Chief Carmen Best decreased the officers’ presence in the east precinct to allow for peaceful protests.

City officials hope to talk to protesters but there is no centralized leadership among protesters, so making a deal still remains a challenge.

When the Mayor of Seattle Jenny Durkan was asked on CNN on Friday how long CHAZ could remain in place, her answer was: “I don’t know, we could have a summer of love.”

Best appeared on ABC’s *Good Morning America* the same day and said she believed the current situation, with police officers displaced and unable to respond to priority calls in a timely way, is dangerous.

There are officers near the zone and they are still responding to emergency calls. Best said call response times in the area normally served by the east precinct have tripled in the three days since CHAZ inception — from just over 5 minutes to 18 minutes. Secondary calls are taking almost an hour.

“We did not, for clarification, abandon the precinct. But we did have to remove some personnel for a short period of time, and then it became unsafe,” Best said.

“It makes good sense we do our job effectively and — while I support First Amendment free speech — this is not that, and we need to



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make sure we are working to get officers back in and to peaceably resolve the issues outstanding.”

Flanked by several officers, Best entered the east precinct on Thursday morning for the first time in days. She told KOMO News the same day that the command for them to leave was too quick, and that they were not even able to get their equipment out of the area.

‘Major victory’

Seattle City Council member Kshama Sawant called the establishment of CHAZ a major victory and said the area should be turned over permanently into community control.

Sawant said she plans to create legislation to turn the east precinct into a community center for restorative justice.

Sawant helped support CHAZ on Tuesday when she opened the doors to the City Hall to allow hundreds of protesters inside.

More than 1,000 protesters spent an hour talking about defunding the Seattle Police Department, banning chemical weapon use by police, and railing against Durkan, demanding she step down immediately.

On Wednesday, CHAZ drew the fire of US President Donald Trump, who took a few jabs on Twitter at

Washington State Governor Jay Inslee and Durkan for their handling of the George Floyd protests.

Trump called Inslee “radical” and threatened to “take back the city” if the officials did not intervene. In a subsequent tweet Trump said “domestic terrorists” had taken over Seattle in the midst of its second consecutive week of protests in the wake of George Floyd’s death.

King County Republican Party opened a page at PeitionBuild.org on June 9 to support the police, asking for signatures on the petition to oppose any efforts to defund the police department of the county.

“Police in King County have been given the highest levels of diversity and de-escalation training. The officers and police chiefs across the country have condemned the actions of the officers in Minneapolis; however, extremists condemn all police for actions in which they had no hand. Our officers experience hatred and violence purely because they wear a uniform. Moreover, the very politicians who should support police departments instead systematically undermine them.”

District Court Judge Richard Jones on Friday issued a temporary restraining order prohibiting Seattle police officers from using pepper spray, tear gas and flash bang devices as part of their crowd control efforts, handing a victory to “Black Lives Matter” and other protesters who have taken issue with the use of such devices.

The order by Jones followed a hearing in which both sides made arguments to support their case, but the order is limited in that he allowed for the use of chemicals if efforts to subdue a threat by using alternative crowd measures fail.

The restraining order will expire 14 days from the day it was issued. It was not immediately clear if the city would appeal the court’s decision.



Love that knows no barriers

Suzane Valverde hugs her mother Carmelita Valverde, 85, through a plastic curtain at a nursing home in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on Saturday. NELSON ALMEIDA / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Venice to recreate lost treasure of world’s first public opera house

By JULIAN SHEA
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Residents of Venice, famed for its canal network and artistic treasures, are used to enduring the batterings of high tides and flooding, but this year they had barely recovered from that before the Veneto region found itself one of the hot-spots of Italy’s devastating novel coronavirus outbreak.

After four months of suffering, the country is coming out of lockdown, and a beacon of hope is offered by the restoration of a lost Venetian cultural jewel that could soon be back on the map, as plans are afoot to recreate the world’s first public opera house, Teatro San Cassiano, which opened in 1637.

This event inspired opera’s mass popularity but in 1812, the theater was demolished, meaning there are no professionally active opera houses from the baroque period anywhere in the world.

Recreating it is the dream of British musicologist Paul Atkin, who was inspired by a similar project at Shakespeare’s Globe theater in London, which has been a critical and commercial success.

“Cultural exchange always leads the way in international relations,

and in that era there were few places in the world as important as Venice,” Atkin told China Daily.

“It was the entry point into Europe for Chinese traders as the end of the Silk Road, it’s the home of Marco Polo, one of Europe’s greatest explorers, and every modern opera house is descended from San Cassiano. What the Globe means to London and Shakespeare, this means to Venice and opera.”



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Paul Atkin,
British musicologist

Opera became popular in the 16th century but only for the elite, until commercially-minded theater owners in Venice rebuilding San Cassiano decided to make it suitable for opera as well as theatrical performances, changing music history.

“The first opera staged there, Francesco Manelli’s *L’Andromeda* in 1637, was so popular that by the

end of the century Venice alone had 11 opera houses,” Atkin said. “But as opera grew more popular, theaters got bigger and the intimacy was lost. That’s what we’re bringing back.”

Having recreated the blueprints from later architectural drawings, Atkin thinks his team have made the theater as close to the original as possible.

“We’ve pulled it from the grave,” he said. “You can’t get everything right but musically and historically, it’ll be as close an experience as possible to how it was originally.”

“The capacity will be just 405, with 99 seats in the stalls over six rows, then five tiers of boxes, with six singers on stage at any one time, and eight musicians. When you hear it like that, the experience will be closer to how it was envisaged by composers and musicians at the time.

“When I started, the locals thought ‘who is this crazy Englishman?’ but as it’s gone on, they’ve seen it isn’t just a project for Venice, it’s with Venice. Whenever possible, we use local people, even to design our website and print our publicity material, and the local builders know what they’re doing.”

Days before the novel coronavirus hit the city, the project took a mean-

Remembering Grenfell



People hug during a commemoration to mark the third anniversary of the Grenfell Tower fire in London, Britain on Sunday. HENRY NICHOLLS / REUTERS

‘Shameful scenes of violence’ in London

Tear gas used to control crowds at unauthorized demonstration in Paris

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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Voices across the political spectrum have expressed their outrage and disgust after violent scenes involving protesters and police in central London on Saturday.

Last weekend a Black Lives Matter, or BLM, rally in Westminster ended in confrontations between some demonstrators and police, and also the defacing of statues including one of former British prime ministers Winston Churchill.

Amid rumors of more threatened damage this weekend, various groups, some of which called themselves statue defenders, arranged to gather in London at the same time as another BLM rally in Hyde Park was scheduled.

This was later moved to Friday because of security fears but despite that, Saturday’s counter-demonstration still went ahead, with participants from far-right political groups taking part, and it soon degenerated into violent confrontation between protesters and police.

“Racist thuggery has no place on our streets. Anyone attacking the police will be met with the full force of the law,” said Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

Opposition leader Keir Starmer said violence against police was “completely unacceptable” and said

the London protests were “led by those intent on causing violence and sowing hate for their own ends”.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan added that: “millions of Londoners will have been disgusted by the shameful scenes of violence, desecration and racism displayed by the right-wing extremists who gathered in our city.”



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UK prime minister

Small, peaceful demonstrations in support of the BLM movement went ahead in Hyde Park and Marble Arch, and at cities outside London, including Brighton, Liverpool and Newcastle.

On Sunday, London’s Metropolitan Police service reported that more than 100 arrests had been made over the course of the day, for offences including breach of the peace, violent disorder, assaulting

officers, possession of an offensive weapon, being drunk and disorderly, and possession of Class A drugs.

Separately, a man handed himself in at a police station in Essex after the publication of images taken during the protest of someone urinating next to a memorial to a police officer killed in a terrorist attack on Westminster in 2018.

There were also angry scenes in the French capital Paris, as a largely peaceful but unauthorized march against police brutality and racism ended with tear gas being fired.

The death during arrest of George Floyd in the United States has provoked anger worldwide, and in France it has raised awareness of the death in 2016 of 24-year-old Adama Traore, who died while being detained by police.

Officially, his cause of death remains unclear, but his family say he was asphyxiated by three officers using the weight of their bodies to hold him down.

“The death of George Floyd has a strong echo in the death in France of my little brother,” said his sister Assa Traore. “What’s happening in the United States is happening in France. Our brothers are dying.”

Protesters chanting “no justice, no peace” first gathered at the Place de la Republique, and were later refused permission to move toward the Opera House in the center of Paris. After three hours, missiles were thrown and the police charged groups of protesters in a move to break up the demonstration.



Atkin aims to recreate an experience as close as possible to how opera was first seen and heard. PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

better for the city,” he said.

“Environmentally and commercially, this is sustainable for Venice. We always use local companies, and this will create about 160 jobs in Venice, for Venetians. If the mayor is seen to back something like this in the current climate, our timing couldn’t be better.

“The reason Shakespeare’s Globe works is because it’s historically informed. I imagine most people take it to be the real thing, not a reconstruction. That’s what we’re aiming for here,” he added.

“The one thing I won’t change at all is measurements. The original builders knew what they were doing, so we trust them. People might be taller now, but we won’t alter the dimensions for that. The modern world is just one step away, but once you go into that box, it’ll be like a time warp.”

Once funding is secured, the build time is just under five years. “If you’re an opera lover, this is your chance to write your name in history — what greater legacy could you leave the world?” he said.

“In times of so much global discomfort, we owe it to ourselves to create culture people can enjoy. This is what we’re doing here, building something the world can share, to bring people together.”