

Anarchist rampage in Berkeley renews free speech debate

BERKELEY, Calif. (AP) — Hundreds of masked, black-clad anarchists who overwhelmed a peaceful California protest and assaulted at least five perceived political enemies have reignited the debate over ensuring free speech while protecting public safety in the city where the U.S. free speech movement was born in the 1960s.

After planned weekend rallies were violently disrupted or canceled, supporters of President Donald Trump and other politically conservative activists complained their free speech rights were blocked by liberal politicians who they say incited left-

wing extremists. When Patriot Prayer founder Joey Gibson canceled his San Francisco rally Saturday, he blamed San Francisco Mayor Ed Lee and Democratic U.S. Rep. Nancy Pelosi for falsely labeling the organization as a hate group and inciting extremism to vow violent disruption.

Others said that the violence on Sunday in nearby Berkeley, known as the U.S. heart of the free speech movement, tarnished their peaceful opposition to Trump's policies.

"It played into the false narrative that some conservatives have spun," about violent left-wing stifling of free speech, Berkeley Mayor

Jesse Arreguin said Monday, a day after the anarchists assaulted people they thought were right-wing extremists and pepper sprayed Gibson.

Gibson's supporters said the Berkeley police failed to protect the handful of right-wing supporters who showed up at the park Sunday afternoon by allowing the black-clad demonstrators to take over the city park without opposition. The right-wing group was outnumbered by thousands of opponents, but the rally was tense but peaceful until the anarchists arrived.

Several demonstrators tried to stop the violence and helped the assault victims escape while others screamed

for the beating to stop.

The attack on the conservatives at the a Berkeley park "definitely sends the wrong message," said Ed Tisher, who came to oppose them but ended up helping a Trump supporter knocked to the ground and shielding him from more possible violence until police arrived.

Yvonne Felarca, a spokeswoman for the militant left-wing organization By Any Means Necessary, defended Sunday's violence, calling it self-defense — even though there were no indications anyone tried to harm the anarchists at the park.

She said right-wing extremists are often armed and want to fight left-wing

opponents, concluding that Sunday's violence was a "success" and sent a message that speech her group considers fascist will not be allowed in ultraliberal Berkeley

Felarca was charged last year with assault and helping incite a riot in Sacramento. The June 2016 melee between about 30 members of a neo-Nazi group and 300 counter-protesters ended with 14 people suffering stab wounds, cuts and bruises.

Berkeley Police Chief Andrew Greenwood said he ordered officers to abandon the park when the black-clad activists arrived. Confronting them would have risked escalating the violence and

jeopardizing the safety of the peaceful protesters, Greenwood said.

The mayor said the police acted appropriately, saying the anarchists "were trying to provoke the police."

Sid Heal, president of California Association of Tactical Officers representing police trained in riot control, said it's "always a tough call" officers to determine how to react when they respond to a crowd on the verge of a riot.

He said he usually advises officers to aggressively arrest people obviously intent on violence like those carrying gas masks or sticks. Police initially used both strategies, quickly arresting people who covered their faces.

BRIEFLY

North Korea fires missile over Japan in aggressive test

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korea fired a ballistic missile from its capital Pyongyang that flew over Japan before plunging into the northern Pacific Ocean, officials said Tuesday, an aggressive test-flight over the territory of a close U.S. ally that sends a clear message of defiance as Washington and Seoul conduct war games nearby.

Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the missile traveled around 1,677 miles and reached a maximum height of 341 miles as it flew over the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido. The launch, which appears to be the first to cross over Japan since 2009, will rattle a region worried that each new missile test puts the North a step closer toward its goal of an arsenal of nuclear missiles that can reliably target the United States.

North Korean missile launches have been happening at an unusually fast pace this year, and some analysts believe that the North could have such an arsenal before the end of U.S. President Donald Trump's first term in early 2021.

Judge sends Indian guru to jail for 20 years in rapes

ROHTAK, India (AP) — A judge on Monday sentenced a popular and flamboyant Indian spiritual guru to a total of 20 years in prison on charges of raping two female followers.

The sentences were pronounced amid intense security at a prison where the guru, who calls himself Dr. Saint Gurmeet Singh Ram Rahim Insan, has been held since his conviction.

The conviction sparked violent protests by the guru's followers that left at least 38 people dead and hundreds injured. Train and bus services were suspended to prevent the guru's supporters from gathering in the town.




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