

3 dead, 20 injured in white nationalist rally violence in Virginia, Trump blames 'many sides'

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Washington: At least three people died and 19 others were injured after violent clashes erupted between white supremacists and counter demonstrators in a rally in the US state of Virginia.

One person died after a car plowed into a group of people peacefully protesting at the rally yesterday while two others died following a helicopter crash that took place near the protest site in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The violence broke out ahead of the 'Unite the Right' rally by white supremacists protesting against the planned removal of a statue of Confederate general Robert E Lee from a park in the college town of Charlottesville, 256 kilometres from Virginia.

Following the clashes, a state of emergency was declared by the authorities, and police and security forces were deployed in riot gears.

The violence erupted between two groups in this university town some 120 miles south west of the national capital.

US President Donald Trump described this a terrible event.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides, on many sides," Trump told reporters at a news conference at his gold resort in New Jersey where he is currently on a working summer vacation.

"It's been going on for a long time in our country. Not Donald Trump, not Barack Obama, this has been going on for a long, long time. It has no place in America. What is vital now is a swift restoration of law and order and the protection of innocent lives," he said.

"No citizen should ever fear for their safety and security in our society. And no child should ever be afraid to go outside and play or be with their parents and have a good time," he said.

Trump said he spoke to Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe. "We agree that the hate and the division must stop, and must stop right now," he said as hundreds of white nationalists, neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan members gathered in Charlottesville which they described as one of their biggest rally in decades.

They clashed with another group of people who were opposing this rally of white nationalists.

The incident took place when "a gray car accelerating into crowds on a pedestrian mall, sending bodies flying, and then reversing at high speed, hitting yet more people," The Washington Post reported.

The driver was arrested. Virginia Police said two more people died when a helicopter crashed near protest site. The cause of the crash remains under investigation at this time, the police said in a statement.

According to local media reports, demonstrators shouted and threw bottles at the opposing groups.

"I am heartbroken that a life has been lost here. I urge all people of good will go home," said Charlottesville Mayor Mike

Singer.

Indian American Vanita Gupta, president and CEO of the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, called on Trump to "denounce what happened this weekend and the white supremacist hate behind it".

"She demanded the FBI open an investigation into the violence.

"There can be no doubt that the appalling display of white supremacy and hatred on display in Charlottesville today was the precipitator of the violence," said National Nurse Union executive director RoseAnn DeMoro.

Virginia Senator Mark R Warner said Virginians mourn the life taken in this morning's events and reject this hateful violence in Charlottesville.

"We condemn the intolerance behind it and those who would pass it off as a legitimate political movement," he said.

"Violent acts of hate and bigotry have no place in America. The attacks we are witnessing in Charlottesville are completely unacceptable and must not be allowed to continue.

"Violence like this will solve nothing and will only beget more violence and sow more division," said Senator Dianne Feinstein.

The Democratic National Committee chair Tom Perez said the demonstrations by white supremacists this weekend have no place in the US.

"This vile display of racism is?an attack on our democracy and an?affront to humanity," he said.

"America is no place for bigots. And to be silent in the face of their hatred is to condone it. That's why it is on all of us to stand up to these reprehensible acts and speak out against white supremacy. We cannot allow a group of cowards instill fear in our communities," Perez said.

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