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Thousands of Trump Supporters Rally in Washington

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By: by Camille CAMDESSUS

Thousands of red-hatted protesters filled Washington streets Saturday to support Donald Trump's claims of election fraud, undeterred by the U.S. Supreme Court's rejection of what may have been his last chance to overturn the results.

Thousands gathered around Freedom Plaza, a few blocks from the White House, in a festive atmosphere earlier in the day, while scuffles broke out later between protesters and counter-demonstrators.

Police, some in riot gear, used their bodies and bicycles to keep the groups apart. There was also at least one clash between police and counter-protesters.

Six people were arrested, following five arrests Friday night related to a brawl, local media reported.

Some pro-Trump demonstrators showed up in tactical gear, chanting "USA" and "four more years" for the president.

It was a sizable crowd, but noticeably smaller than a similar rally a month ago when 10,000 people converged near the White House to support Trump.

"We're not gonna give up," said Luke Wilson, a sixty-something protester who had come all the way from Idaho.

"I believe there is a big injustice being done to the American people," added Dell Quick, a regular at Trump's political rallies. He brandished a flag defending gun rights.

Multiple states have now certified Biden's victory, giving the Democrat 306 votes in the Electoral College to Trump's 232, with 270 required for election. Electors are to formally cast their votes Monday.

But protesters insisted, as Trump has repeatedly done, that there was widespread fraud in the election.

Some pointed to "foreign interference," others to software that allegedly erased millions of votes for the president -- but not those for other Republican candidates on the same ballots.

Quick told AFP that "there's no way possible" Biden was elected.

Susan Bowman, a 62-year-old from Hampton, Virginia, said "this is not a banana republic. We need to fix the election."

Those who addressed the crowd included Michael Flynn, Trump's former national security adviser pleaded guilty to lying about his Russian contacts and was recently pardoned by the president.

'Stolen' election

Dozens of court cases alleging fraud or contesting the result have been decided -- virtually all in Biden's favor, with some judges offering stinging

criticism of the lack of evidence.

But that was not enough for 47-year-old Darlene Denton, who wore a "Trump 2024" badge on her sweatshirt.

"Nobody wants to hear evidence, nobody wants to hear cases, everything just gets thrown out," said Denton, who had come from Tennessee to support a president she said had given "a voice to the people."

Trump has refused to concede to Biden.

"Wow! Thousands of people forming in Washington (D.C.) for Stop the Steal," he tweeted early Saturday. "Didn't know about this, but I'll be seeing them!"

Not long afterward, his helicopter lifted off from the White House grounds and passed over the crowd -- many singing the US national anthem -- as Trump headed to New York to attend the annual Army-Navy football game.

Among the protesters, members of the far-right militia group the Proud Boys were clearly visible -- in their signature black-and-yellow outfits, some wearing bulletproof vests -- and they often drew cheers from others in the crowd.

Some blocks away, supporters of the Black Lives Matter movement held their own, much smaller, rally, chanting "Nazis out!"

Occasional violent clashes with counter-protesters during the November rally left a few people with stab wounds. Police made some 20 arrests related to that event.