



Civil Rights Groups Sue Trump, Barr for Tear-Gassing Peaceful Protesters Outside White House

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(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – Protesters who were attacked by federal troops in front of the White House Monday night as they were demonstrating nonviolently against police brutality sued President Donald Trump, Attorney General William Barr, Secretary of Defense Mark Esper, and numerous other federal officials today for violating their constitutional rights. The lawsuit was filed by the Washington Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, ACLU of the District of Columbia, Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, and the law firm of Arnold & Porter.

“What happened to our members Monday evening, here in the nation’s capital, was an affront to all our rights,” said April Goggans, Core Organizer of Black Lives Matter D.C., the lead plaintiff in the case. “The death of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor at the hands of police officers has reignited the rage, pain, and deep sadness our community has suffered for generations. We won’t be silenced by tear gas and rubber bullets. Now is our time to be heard.”

Hundreds of protesters were gathered Monday evening in Lafayette Square, the park in front of the White House, to demonstrate solidarity with the nationwide Black Lives Matter movement and protest police brutality, including the recent murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Immediately preceding the president’s appearance in the Rose Garden at approximately 6:30 PM, officers of the U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Park Police, D.C. National Guard, U.S. Military Police, and Arlington County (Va.) Police Department conducted a coordinated charge into the nonviolent and unresisting crowd of demonstrators, and deployed several rounds of tear gas, rubber bullets, and sound cannons to disperse the crowd away from the park.

Following his brief statement, President Trump and White House officials walked to St. John’s Episcopal Church, the historic church that had been damaged by a fire set during the previous days’ protests, to pose for pictures in front of the church holding a Bible.

The case filed today, *Black Lives Matter D.C. v. Trump*, on behalf of Black Lives Matter D.C. and five individual protesters who were assaulted at Lafayette Square, asserts that Trump, Barr, and numerous other high-level federal officials and line officers of the Secret Service, Park Police, D.C. National Guard, U.S. Military Police, and Arlington County Police violated protesters’ First Amendment right to freedom of speech and assembly, violated their Fourth

Amendment right to be free from unreasonable seizures, and engaged in a conspiracy to violate their civil rights. The case seeks an injunction against future such attacks and damages for the injuries sustained by the individual plaintiffs—including a 9-year-old boy—and Black Lives Matter D.C.. It was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. The complaint can be found [here](#).

Below are additional comments:

“The deaths at the hands of police of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other people of color has brought people to the streets across the nation to call for change. At this moment, the White House is a uniquely important venue for protest and demonstration. The actions in Lafayette park were a shocking assault on the First Amendment rights of people peaceably assembled to call upon their government for action,” said Jonathan M. Smith, Executive Director, Washington Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights and Urban Affairs.

“The President’s shameless, unconstitutional, and frankly criminal attack on peaceful protesters because he disagreed with their views shakes the foundation of our nation’s constitutional order,” said Scott Michelman, legal director, ACLU of the District of Columbia. “And when the nation’s top law enforcement officer becomes complicit in the tactics of an autocrat, it chills protected speech for all of us.”

“For the President to refer to this assault as domination is very telling and indicates a willingness to use brute force to trample on the rights of Americans,” said Kristen Clarke, president and executive director of the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. “The Lafayette Square assault amounts to unconstitutional and unlawful state-sponsored violence perpetrated against nonviolent civil rights activists. The actions of the government caused harm and were intended to chill the speech and right to assembly of people exercising constitutionally protected rights. This lawsuit is about defending rights that lie at the heart of our democracy.”

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