Eighty Criminal Justice Leaders Call for Injunction Against Federal Troop Deployment to American Cities

Elected DAs, Attorneys General, Law Enforcement Leaders and Former US Attorneys file Amicus Brief Expressing Deep Concern with Engagement and Tactics of Federal Agents in Portland and Elsewhere

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, 80 criminal justice leaders – including eight Attorneys General and twelve current or former Police Chiefs and Sheriffs – filed an amicus brief in support of a lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia objecting to federal law enforcement deployment and tactics in Portland, Oregon. Signed by current and former elected local prosecutors, Attorneys General and law enforcement leaders, as well as former United States Attorneys and DOJ officials, the brief argues that federal law enforcement officers exceeded the limits of their authority in Portland and that their ongoing and threatened presence in cities around the nation threatens public trust and safety. The brief notes the vitally important role of local law enforcement and criminal justice leaders in guiding the appropriate response to community unrest, and the more attenuated connection to those communities of federal authorities whose ongoing presence is contrary to the wishes of local leaders.

“As people have taken to the streets to exercise their fundamental right to protest and advocate for a fair and equitable justice system, the federal government’s deployment of federal agents into American cities has fueled distrust, fear and further unrest in communities,” said Miriam Krinsky, Executive Director of Fair and Just Prosecution, the organization that coordinated the brief. “Images of federal officers gassing, beating and rounding up peaceful protesters, while wearing no badges or name tags and driving unmarked vehicles, is at odds with the system of justice our nation can and should stand for. These acts are not only unconstitutional, they are also counterproductive, damaging to community trust, and pose a substantial threat to public safety in Portland and across the nation.”

In the brief, amici point to the inextricable link between public trust and public safety, noting that community trust relies on people seeing the criminal justice system as legitimate, which requires law enforcement to demonstrate a commitment to fair and equitable policing. Yet, decades of police brutality and racially biased outcomes have eroded trust in law enforcement, especially in Black communities and other communities of color, and “fanning the flames of distrust by responding with a show of force – rather than with understanding, dialogue, and de-escalation – will do lasting damage to the entire justice system.”

Signatories to the brief include Attorneys General Thomas J. Donovan Jr. (Vermont), Keith Ellison (Minnesota), Robert W. Ferguson (Washington), Brian E. Frosh (Maryland), Kathleen
Jennings (Delaware), Karl Racine (District of Columbia), Kwame Raoul (Illinois) and Ellen Rosenblum (Oregon); law enforcement leaders such as Sheriffs Jerry L. Clayton (Washtenaw County, Michigan) and Garry McFadden (Mecklenburg County, North Carolina), Police Chief Abdul Pridgen (Seaside, California) and former Police Chiefs Joseph Brann, Jim Bueermann, Brendan Cox, Ronald L. Davis, Brandon del Pozo, Drew Diamond, William Lansdowne, Ronal Serpas and Norm Stamper; and former U.S. Attorneys Channing Phillips (Washington, D.C.), Kenyon Brown (Alabama) and Jerome O’Neill (Vermont). Signatories also include elected prosecutors who have had federal agents deployed to their communities such as District Attorney Mike Schmidt (Multnomah County, Oregon) and Prosecuting Attorney Dan Satterberg (King County, Washington).

“At a time of unrest and uncertainty, local law enforcement and criminal justice leaders should be focused on restoring community trust in the justice system by investing in relationship building with the communities we are sworn to protect,” said Ronald L. Davis, former Director of the COPS Office and former Chief of the East Palo Alto, California Police Department, a signatory to the brief.

While federal troops may have temporarily – and only in part – left Portland, the brief notes that the ongoing threat of federal intervention “looms over the community” and will “exacerbate tensions... in places where emotions are already running dangerously high.”

"We cannot do this critical work if the federal government is forcefully entering American cities uninvited and violating the constitutional rights of nonviolent peaceful protesters with no accountability. Even just the threat of such action is damaging to public trust and safety,” said Channing Phillips, former U.S. Attorney and former Counsel to the Attorney General of the United States, and another signatory to the brief.

Amici also argue that they “have a responsibility to criminally prosecute federal law enforcement agents where the evidence shows that the actors engaged in activities that caused harm to residents amici are sworn to protect – whether that harm is in the form of excessive use of force, illegal detention or arrest, or other violations of rights.” But doing so is challenging when federal agents fail to wear identification and it is difficult to determine to whom they report or are accountable.

“My primary responsibility as a prosecutor is to advance public safety in my community, and the federal government’s interference with local law enforcement and infringement on Americans’ constitutional rights put public safety at risk,” said Multnomah County, Oregon District Attorney Mike Schmidt. “We’re at a critical juncture where law enforcement must heal divisions within their communities. The egregious actions seen in Portland – as well as other cities across the country – undermine these efforts and further threaten our ability to enact meaningful reform.”

Read the brief here, and for a list of amici, see below.

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**Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit our [website](http://fairandjustprosecution.org) and follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/fairandjustprosecution) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/FJP4Justice).**
List of Amici

Chiraag Bains
Former Trial Attorney, Criminal Section, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice
Former Senior Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice

Paul Bardacke
Former Attorney General, New Mexico

Diana Becton
District Attorney, Contra Costa County, California

Wesley Bell
Prosecuting Attorney, St. Louis County, Missouri

Buta Biberaj
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Loudoun County, Virginia

Sherry Boston
District Attorney, DeKalb County, Georgia

Chesa Boudin
District Attorney, City and County of San Francisco, California

Joseph Brann
Former Chief, Hayward Police Department, California
Former Director, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice

Aisha Braveboy
State’s Attorney, Prince George’s County, Maryland

Kenyen Brown
Former U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Alabama

Jim Bueermann
Former Chief, Redlands Police Department, California

John Choi
County Attorney, Ramsey County, Minnesota

Jerry L. Clayton
Sheriff, Washtenaw County, Michigan

Dave Clegg
District Attorney, Ulster County, New York
Shameca Collins  
District Attorney, 6th Judicial District, Mississippi

Scott Colom  
District Attorney, 16th Judicial District, Mississippi

Brendan Cox  
Former Chief, Albany Police Department, New York  
Director of Policing Strategies, LEAD National Support Bureau

John Creuzot  
District Attorney, Dallas County, Texas

Ronald L. Davis  
Former Director, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice  
Former Chief, East Palo Alto Police Department, California

Satana Deberry  
District Attorney, Durham County, North Carolina

Parisa Dehghani-Tafti  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Arlington County and the City of Falls Church, Virginia

Brandon del Pozo  
Former Chief, Burlington Police Department, Vermont

Drew Diamond  
Former Chief, Tulsa Police Department, Oklahoma

Thomas J. Donovan, Jr.  
Attorney General, Vermont

Michael Dougherty  
District Attorney, 20th Judicial District, Colorado

Mark Dupree  
District Attorney, Wyandotte County, Kansas

Keith Ellison  
Attorney General, Minnesota

Robert W. Ferguson  
Attorney General, Washington

Kimberly M. Foxx  
State’s Attorney, Cook County, Illinois
Brian E. Frosh  
Attorney General, Maryland

Douglas Gansler  
Former Attorney General, Maryland  
Former State’s Attorney, Montgomery County, Maryland

Gil Garcetti  
Former District Attorney, Los Angeles County, California

Kimberly Gardner  
Circuit Attorney, City of St. Louis, Missouri

Sarah F. George  
State’s Attorney, Chittenden County, Vermont

Joe Gonzales  
District Attorney, Bexar County, Texas

Eric Gonzalez  
District Attorney, Kings County, New York

Mark Gonzalez  
District Attorney, Nueces County, Texas

Andrea Harrington  
District Attorney, Berkshire County, Massachusetts

Scott Harshbarger  
Former Attorney General, Massachusetts

Jim Hingeley  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Albemarle County, Virginia

John Hummel  
District Attorney, Deschutes County, Oregon

Susan Hutson  
Former Chief Prosecutor, City of Corpus Christi, Texas  
President, National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement

Natasha Irving  
District Attorney, 6th Prosecutorial District, Maine

Michael Jackson  
District Attorney, Dallas County, Alabama
Kathleen Jennings
Attorney General, Delaware

Justin F. Kollar
Prosecuting Attorney, Kauai County, Hawaii

Lawrence S. Krasner
District Attorney, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Miriam Aroni Krinsky
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney, Criminal Appellate Chief, and General Crimes Chief, Central District of California
Former Chair, Solicitor General’s Criminal Appellate Advisory Group

William Lansdowne
Former Chief, San Diego Police Department, California
Former Chief, San Jose Police Department, California
Former Chief, Richmond Police Department, California

Patricia Madrid
Former Attorney General, New Mexico

Garry McFadden
Sheriff, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Brian Middleton
District Attorney, Fort Bend County, Texas

Stephanie Morales
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Portsmouth, Virginia

Marilyn J. Mosby
State’s Attorney, Baltimore City, Maryland

Jerome O’Neill
Former Acting U.S. Attorney, District of Vermont

Jody Owens
District Attorney, Hinds County, Mississippi

Jim Petro
Former Attorney General, Ohio

Channing Phillips
Former U.S. Attorney, District of Columbia
Former Counsel to the Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice
Bryan Porter
Commonwealth’s Attorney, City of Alexandria, Virginia

Abdul Pridgen
Chief, Seaside Police Department, California

Karl A. Racine
Attorney General, District of Columbia

Kwame Raoul
Attorney General, Illinois

Ira Reiner
Former District Attorney, Los Angeles County, California
Former City Attorney, Los Angeles, California

Rachael Rollins
District Attorney, Suffolk County, Massachusetts

Ellen Rosenblum
Attorney General, Oregon

Stephen Rosenthal
Former Attorney General, Virginia

Marian T. Ryan
District Attorney, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

Dan Satterberg
Prosecuting Attorney, King County, Washington

Mike Schmidt
District Attorney, Multnomah County, Oregon

Ronal Serpas
Former Superintendent, New Orleans Police Department, Louisiana
Former Chief, Metropolitan Nashville Police Department, Tennessee
Former Chief, Washington State Patrol

Daniella Shorter
District Attorney, 22nd Judicial District, Mississippi

Carol A. Siemon
Prosecuting Attorney, Ingham County, Michigan

Norm Stamper
Former Chief, Seattle Police Department, Washington
David E. Sullivan
District Attorney, Northwestern District, Massachusetts

Shannon Taylor
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Henrico County, Virginia

Raúl Torrez
District Attorney, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

Gregory Underwood
Commonwealth’s Attorney, City of Norfolk, Virginia

Matthew Van Houten
District Attorney, Tompkins County, New York

Andrew Warren
District Attorney, 13th Judicial Circuit, Florida

Lynneice Washington
District Attorney, Jefferson County, Bessemer Division, Alabama