



**INTERFAITH
CRIMINAL
JUSTICE
COALITION**

<http://interfaithjustice.org>

The Honorable Jerrold Nadler
2132 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Jordan
2056 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Jordan:

As people of faith we have a moral obligation to speak out against institutional racism and stand with our friends and neighbors across the country as they call for justice. The undersigned members of the Interfaith Criminal Justice Coalition, as partners of the Washington Interfaith Staff Community and a working group of the Justice Roundtable, stand with the [Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights](#) and other civil rights organizations as we call on Congress to address the American policing crisis.

Centuries of slavery, bigotry and discrimination have created a lasting wound on the heart of our nation. For decades Black and Brown people have faced discrimination and violence at the hands of a racist policing system. The killing of George Floyd by police officers in Minneapolis laid bare the American policing crisis. Yet, George Floyd is far from the first person to lose their life to this crisis. Breonna Taylor, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and countless others have lost their lives to the police. The time has come for Congress to end this injustice. Specifically, we call on Congress to:

1. Require a federal standard that use of force be reserved for only when *necessary* as a last resort after exhausting reasonable options, and incentivize states through federal funding mechanisms to implement this standard; require the use of de-escalation techniques, and the duty to intervene; ban the use of force as a punitive measure or means of retaliation against individuals who only verbally confront officers, or against individuals who pose a danger only to themselves; and require all officers to accurately report all uses of force;
2. Prohibit all maneuvers that restrict the flow of blood or oxygen to the brain, including neck holds, chokeholds, and similar excessive force, deeming the use of such force a federal civil rights violation;
3. Prohibit racial profiling and require robust data collection on police-community encounters and law enforcement activities. Data should capture all demographic categories and be disaggregated;
4. Eliminate federal programs that provide military equipment to law enforcement;
5. Prohibit the use of no-knock warrants, especially for drug searches;
6. Change the 18 U.S.C. Sec. 242 mens rea requirement from willfulness to recklessness, permitting prosecutors to successfully hold law enforcement accountable for the deprivation of civil rights and civil liberties;
7. Develop a national public database that would cover all police agencies in the United States and its territories, similar to the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training's National Decertification Index, which would compile the names of officers who have had their licenses revoked due to misconduct, including but not limited to domestic violence, sexual violence, assault and harassment, criminal offense against minors, excessive use of force, violation of 18 U.S.C. § 242; perjury, falsifying a police report or planting and destroying evidence, and deadly physical assault; as well as terminations and complaints against the officers; and
8. End the qualified immunity doctrine which prevents police from being held legally accountable when they break the law. Qualified immunity, a defense that shields officials from being sued, has been interpreted by courts so broadly that it allows officers to engage in unconstitutional acts with impunity.



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These necessary changes are only the beginning. In order to truly address the problems with the American policing system we must address the systemic racism that underpins this crisis. Only through tireless work at every level of our society can we heal ourselves of the disease of racism. We call on Congress to do its part. We call on you to be tireless advocates for racial justice.

All lives will not matter until Black lives matter.

Signed,

African American Ministers In Action
Alliance of Baptists
Church of Scientology National Affairs Office
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Jesuit Conference – Office of Justice and Ecology
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd
National Council of Churches
National Religious Campaign Against Torture
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Office of Public Witness
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas Justice Team
T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights
UCC Justice and Witness Ministries
Union for Reform Judaism
The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society

Cc: Members of the House Judiciary Committee