



July 17, 2020

Chair and Members of the Committee:

My name is Rabbi Debra Kolodny. I live in Multnomah County and am the Executive Director of Portland United Against Hate.

Today I will read a letter written in collaboration by 7 community organizations active in police oversight work. It was signed by over 70 organizations and clergy in two days and almost another 400 additional Portlanders in one day. This letter addresses both tear gas and police violence in general.

July 16, 2020

Mayor Wheeler:

We write in horror after weeks of violent police escalation in response to Portland protests beginning on May 29, 2020. As of July 13, Portland tops the list of cities with the most police brutality since George Floyd's murder at 73 incidents.¹

We come from all walks of life. We are youth, middle aged, and elders. We are cisgender and straight, trans and queer. Some of us are secular, others are people of faith, others still are clergy. We are Black, white, Brown, Immigrant and Indigenous. We are able bodied and disabled. We are teachers and lawyers and child care workers. We are trade's people and health care workers and social service providers. We are students and parents and grandparents.

We care passionately about ending police brutality and 'crowd control' violence. **BLACK LIVES MATTER** to us. The following demands represent what we think are foundational to manifesting a commitment to BLACK LIVES. The Portland Police Association says they have no confidence in you, Portland's elected leaders, but we are eager to move forward with the City Council on the following. In fact, we offer a resounding YES to every request Commissioner Hardesty made in her July 1 letter to you and PPB Chief Lovell.

We demand:

- The immediate removal of all Federal Marshalls from Portland.
- The end to falsely declaring gatherings to be 'civil disturbances' or 'unlawful assemblies' or, most outrageously, a 'riot.' These declarations allow police to act violently towards protestors and imply that protestors are putting lives in danger when the truth of the matter is protestors are exercising their First Amendment right to free speech.
- The end to the false narrative that protestors are violent and are precipitating the violent response of the police. Rather, protesting is one way we exercise our Constitutional right to 'petition the government for redress of grievances.' This is especially urgent in the call for Black Lives to Matter. We believe the first hand testimonies of dozens of ACLU and NLG Legal observers, medics, media, clergy, and around 40 reports to PUAH's ReportHatePDX. PUAH's testimonies describe police repeatedly seeking to end protest with violence, or in the words of the LRAD, "use of force." First hand witnesses testify that protestor initiated violence is rare and never worthy of the violent police response.
- The end to the use of all crowd control munitions against protestors, including but not limited to: projectile rounds, CS and OC skat shells, 40mm munitions of Saf Smoke, 60-Caliber Rubber Balls Rounds, 40mm munitions of foam and rubber rounds, triple chaser separating canisters, as well as kettling and non-weaponized physical assault. ²

¹ <https://846policebrutality.com>

² Rise of the Warrior Cop: the Militarization of America's Police Forces by Radley Balko
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGbd-cm3bio>;
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/yiz01hv6p5zlboc/Complaint%20Green.pdf>

- Compliance with court orders against the use of tear gas and other chemical agents at a time when people are dying of COVID 19 and protestors in other cities have died from the inhalation of tear gas.³
- The end to targeting ACLU and National Lawyer's Guild Legal Observers, Medics, and Journalists.⁴ If it does not trouble you that the Portland Police Bureau wants no witnesses to their actions, it should.
- Eliminate the Rapid Response team as well as all associated units that work with them for crowd control. Ensure that no police wear riot gear.
- Restrict the use of overtime, especially when monitoring protests.
- Hold the city attorney accountable for police actions of crowd control that violate constitutional rights.
- Compliance with recommendations of the 2018 Portland Auditor's Independent Police Review Report on Crowd Control.⁵ We especially draw your attention to the following pages in that report:
 - Forbidding mass detentions (pp 12, 14)
 - Providing better recorded evidence (pp 13-14)
 - Prohibiting the detention of media and legal observers (p 14)
 - Updating intergovernmental agreements to require law enforcement entities present in Portland comply with Portland rules of engagement and court orders (pp 13-14)
- Compliance with and mandatory training on verbal de-escalation tactics, proven to be the only approach that works for crowd management. As experts say: "There's 50 years of research on violence at protests, dating back to the three federal commissions formed between 1967 and 1970. All three concluded that when police escalate force --using weapons, tear gas, mass arrests and other tools to make protesters do what the police want — those efforts can often go wrong, creating the very violence that force was meant to prevent." ⁶
- Required mental health services for officers staffing crowd control to ensure that they are not operating out of years of PTSD and to ensure that their families do not suffer as a by-product of the militarized work they are being ordered to engage in. ⁷

³ <https://nypost.com/2020/06/09/ohio-woman-dies-after-exposure-to-tear-gas-pepper-spray>

⁴ <https://www.change.org/p/mayor-ted-wheeler-mayor-wheeler-protect-the-first-amendment>

<https://aclu-or.org/en/news/3ortland-police-must-demilitarize-its-response-protests>

⁵ <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/ipr/article/686119>

⁶ <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/de-escalation-keeps-protesters-and-police-safer-heres-why-departments-respond-with-force-anyway/>

⁷ <https://money.yahoo.com/data-suggests-40-percent-cops-145601125.html>

We feel great urgency around the implementation of the above demands. We are not inclined towards abstract resolutions, commissions or empty promises. You have the power to act and we call upon you to act immediately.

We look forward to your prompt attention on this matter.

cc:

Portland City Commissioners: Eudaly, Fritz and Hardesty
Multnomah County Commission: Chair Kafoury, Commissioners Meieran, Jayapal, Vega
Pederson, Stegmann
Governor Kate Brown
Oregon State Rep. Alissa Keny-Guyer
Rep. Janelle Bynum
Rep. Akasha Lawrence Spence
Oregon State Sen. Lew Frederick
Sen. Floyd Prozanski
Sen. James Manning
U.S. Senators Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley

Sincerely,

107 Independent Supporters Trust
AFSCME Local 402 Graduate Researchers United
APANO
As the Spirit Moves Us
Matt Hilton, President AFSCME Local 328
Rabbi Benjamin Barnett, Havurah Shalom
BerniePDX
Black and Beyond the Binary Collective
Rabbi Phillip Bressler
Dana Buhl, Director of Social Justice, First Unitarian Portland
CAIR-Oregon
Rev. Aric Clark, Sherwood and Mt. Home United Methodist Churches
Rev. Abigail Clauhs, Community Minister, First Unitarian Portland
Climate Jobs PDX
Rabbi Abby Cohen
Rev. Christopher Craun
Rev. Brendan Curran, Forest Grove United Church of Christ
Reverend Tom Disrud, Associate Minister, First Unitarian Portland
The Rev. Lenny Duncan, Pastor, Jubilee Collective
Rev. Elizabeth Durant, Central Pacific Conference, United Church of Christ
Rev. Michael Ellick, Metanoia Peace Community
Extinction Rebellion
Farm Worker Ministry Northwest
First Unitarian Portland
Freedom to Thrive
Friendly House Inc.
Greater Portland Trans Unity
Dr. Tom Hastings, Portland Peace Team, Oregon Peace Institute
Grant Helby (approved for ordination, UCC)
IMIrj: Oregon Interfaith Movement for Immigrant Justice

Rev. Katherine Jesch, Community Minister, First Unitarian Portland
Jewish Voice for Peace-Portland
Dr. K. Kendall, Portland Buddhist Peace Fellowship
Rabbi Debra Kolodny, Portland's UnShul
Latino Network
Will Layng, Executive Director, Portland Jobs With Justice
Maplewood Neighborhood Association
Nasty Women Get Shit Done
Never Again Portland
Northeast Coalition of Neighborhoods
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Oregon Unitarian Universalist Voices for Justice
Oregon Walks
Pacific Northwest Family Circle
Portland Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators
Portland Central America Solidarity Committee (PCASC)
Portland Democratic Socialists of America
Portland Metro-People's Coalition
Portland NAACP 1120
Portland Raging Grannies
Portland Small Business Owners Demand Mayor Ted Wheeler Defund Portland Police Bureau (representing over 5000 business owners)⁸
Rev. Cecil Charles Prescod, Ainsworth United Church of Christ
PUAH (Portland United Against Hate) (representing over 80 community organizations)
Portland's Resistance
QCenter
Resolutions Northwest (RNW)
The Reverend Kerlin Richter
Safe Routes Partnership, Pacific Northwest
Imam Wajdi Said, Arab American Community of Portland
Rabbi Jonathan Seidel
Rev. Jessica Shine, National Offices United Church of Christ
Rev. Bill Sinkford, Sr. Minister, First Unitarian Portland
Rev. Lynne Smouse López, Ainsworth United Church of Christ
Priestess Blaed Spence, Reclaiming Collective
Rabbi Ariel Stone, Congregation Shir Tikvah
Stop Fracked Gas PDX
UNITE Oregon
Rev. Ron Werner Jr., Oregon Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Rev. Tara Wilkins, Bridgeport United Church of Christ
Workers World Portland
Rev. Connie Yost, Community Minister, West Hills UU Fellowship

⁸ <https://www.change.org/p/portland-small-business-owners-portland-small-business-owners-demand-mayor-ted-wheeler-defund-portland-police-bureau>