

Submitter: Sandy Chung
On Behalf Of: Community Member 9
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: HB4131

Community member 9, Portland: I have had tear gas used on me perhaps a dozen times in Portland. In each instance, I was engaged in fully nonviolent peaceful protest: handing out first aid supplies and drinking water, holding a sign, or simply standing in a public park.

The experience of being tear gassed is incomparable to any other physical experience I have had. It is suffocating, burning, terrifying. You can't see in order to find an escape route, and usually there is no escape route, because there is a vast quantity of poison gas all around you. You can't breathe, even as your body tries to suck in air to give oxygen to your muscles so you can flee. Your skin burns. You may vomit, and the vomiting hurts more because it involves heaving more poison gas into your stomach and lungs. It is a weapon of war.

My skin, eyes, and lungs burned for hours after each exposure. Walking through outdoor areas that had been gassed, even several days later, burned my eyes and lungs. The environmental damage of poisoning our air, soil, and water is not my area of specialization, but the existing studies indicate horrific and lasting damage to the air, water, and soil we all rely on to live.

The worst part of tear gas, though, is the lasting damage it does to people's internal organs. My partner experienced bloody diarrhea for periods up to three days each time he was tear gassed. Each time I was tear gassed, despite being on hormonal birth control that normally prevents me from menstruating at all, I began menstruating incredibly heavily within an hour or two. The menstruation itself was very strange - blood clots larger than I have ever seen, and sometimes, the blood was just black.

From June through August 2020, after being tear gassed beginning in June, I did not stop menstruating. I had a period that was 68 days long. I sought medical care and was told that doctors know almost nothing about tear gas, and really didn't know how to treat me.

It has been 17 months since I was last exposed to tear gas, and I am still menstruating roughly 70% of the time. My doctor tells me I have developed large ovarian cysts and fibroids. They hurt. A lot. I have bad uterine cramps most days. I am almost always bleeding. I am in my 30s and am likely now infertile. And my doctor cannot find a way to stop me from bleeding. I have been on two separate kinds of hormonal birth control, simultaneously, for nearly four months now. It's all the doctor could think of to try, because again, there is nearly no medical research about tear

gas. I am still bleeding.

It is unconscionable to do this to your populace. You are using weapons of war on us. You are poisoning us in ways medical science doesn't even understand. You are permanently disabling our internal organs. You are poisoning our air, soil, and water. No leader of good conscience could allow this to be done to their citizens, much less suggest that it should be EASIER and less regulated to do to us.

Ban tear gas. Do the right thing, be human beings, and hold to the simple truth that no one should be tortured and disabled, much less doing it en masse to people exercising their right to peaceful protest.