

# POLICE BRUTALITY

INFORMATION SERVICES TEAM

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## THE KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD IS A CRIME AGAINST HUMANITY AND A SYMPTOM OF AUTHORITARIANISM

Over 1,000 adults and minors were killed by US police in 2019, far more than have died in all the school shootings in US history, with all too many such killings being unlawful or unnecessary but police officers rarely being fired, much less charged with a crime for having done so.

The killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020, was both horrifying and indicative of the mentality of many police. Namely that they view people they deem criminals to be enemies of society not deserving of the dignity and protection rightly accorded to all.

Such killings likely have a racial component as well, as African American males like Floyd are disproportionately likely to be targeted and brutalized by white police officers like the one who pressed his knee to Floyd's neck for well over eight minutes while handcuffed and face down on the ground. Shabbir Lakha (*Justice for George Floyd: Minneapolis rebels against racist police*, 28/5/20, counterfire.org) wrote that



“racism is deeply rooted in state institutions”, and went on to write that US police are “institutionally racist killers”.

Racist views will only be amplified in an environment wherein police officers are led to believe criminals are enemies of society and akin to animals like snakes or a disease like cancer as a result of such rhetoric being used by public officials like police chiefs, judges, governors and presidents.

A multidimensional approach is needed to address systemic failures in policing which have led to said carnage, which is largely a result of a lack of

accountability due to many police officers escaping punishment for their unlawful acts. This must include the democratization of law enforcement by replacing all police departments with sheriffs departments with an elected sheriff subject to recall elections, elected district attorneys subject to recall elections, and private criminal prosecutions of unelected law enforcement officials.

Just as important is prohibiting speech by public officials which dehumanizes offenders and likens policing to warfighting and characterizes criminals as “enemies” of society, as this promotes police brutality.

Intimidating dark coloured uniforms and military style assault weapons must also be banned for general use by law enforcement officials as they promote a military mindset, while such weapons facilitate mass murder.

The overuse of military style SWAT units and “no knock” raids must also be addressed, with such units prohibited from being used against non-violent suspects.

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Police brutality is largely a consequence of a lack of accountability, militarization that leads law enforcement officers to view offenders as the enemy, and the dehumanization of offenders.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Replace police departments with sheriffs departments with an elected sheriff subject to recall elections.
- Elect district attorneys subject to recall elections.
- Allow private criminal prosecutions of unelected law enforcement officials.
- Prohibit the use of rhetoric by public officials which likens policing to warfighting, deems offenders to be the “enemy”, or dehumanizes offenders.
- Ban the use of SWAT units against non-violent suspects.
- Ban the use of dark coloured uniforms by [civilian] law enforcement officials (SWAT units excluded).
- Ban the use of military style assault weapons by [civilian] law enforcement officials (SWAT units excluded).

### KEY SOURCE

*Police Violence: Understanding and Controlling Police Abuse of Force*, William A. Geller & Hans Toch, Yale University Press, 1996.

