
Mental Health Alliance

PO Box 3641
Portland, Oregon 97208

Ted Wheeler

Mayor and Police Commissioner, City of Portland

Charles Lovell

Chief of Police, Portland Police Bureau

June 25, 2020

Dear Mayor and Chief,

Add our names to those thousands of other Portland residents who have asked you to cease firing on peaceful protestors.

Recent events added Portland to the list of American cities under the spotlight of the entire world. Sadly, it is not a spotlight for accomplishment, but rather a spotlight for serious flaws in the way this city is run and policed.

In our city, like most major cities in the United States, outrage over the death of George Floyd, Rayshard Brooks, and too many other persons of color and people with mental illness in police custody has spilled over into protest. For three weeks now, protesters have massed in the streets of Portland and in many other cities. It is a test of the resolve and discipline of police across the nation.

It is a test Portland has failed.

Portland police have used force in extreme and excessive ways. They have been the cause of much of the violence they are supposed to protect the citizens of Portland from and fanned the flames of violence -- flames they themselves lit.

Police fired tear gas, pepper balls, rubber-coated steel bullets, and impact munitions into crowds of unarmed and largely peaceful protestors. Police attacked and beat medical students who were trying to provide medical aid to the people the police had injured. Police harassed and attacked journalists who were legitimately reporting on events. They have also targeted and harassed legal observers. Each escalation by the police has been more disturbing and dangerous than the last.

If these were isolated to the current crisis, it would be one thing. One very bad thing. But Portland has had a history of unwarranted violence against persons of color and people with mental illness. The tactics the Bureau is using continue a history of escalated force against people they perceive as “threatening” -- with or without justification.

If peace is going to be restored in Portland, it will not come through battering the protestors into submission. This does not work, and will not work.

Cease fire.

Sincerely,

Organizational Members

Disability Rights Oregon
Mental Health Association of Portland
Oregon Justice Resource Center
Portland Interfaith Clergy Resistance

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Cc: Members of City Council
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