

MINNEAPOLIS

Activist Al Flowers sues Minneapolis police for alleged force used in arrest

Suit asserts that officers violated the activist's rights in 2014 incident.

By Nicole Norfleet (<https://www.startribune.com/nicole-norfleet/6370611/>) Star Tribune |

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Community activist Al Flowers has filed a lawsuit against Minneapolis police department and specifically two officers whom he alleges used excessive force during an arrest a year ago at his home.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court Wednesday after it was moved from Hennepin County District Court.

Flowers was arrested July 25, 2014, after police went to check on his daughter for an electronic home-monitoring violation. According to the complaint, officers Christopher Reiter and Jon Schliesing told Flowers several times when asked during the incident that they did not have a warrant.

One of the officers reportedly grabbed Flowers by his throat and threw him to the ground. After Flowers was handcuffed, he was punched repeatedly and kicked by additional officers before being dragged outside and thrown inside the squad car.

Police took Flowers to the Hennepin County Medical Center, where it was determined that he had sustained severe injuries to his head, eyes, ribs and back, according to the lawsuit. Flowers needed stitches to his right eye and on the front of his head. A week later, X-rays showed that he suffered a fracture to his ribs.

The complaint asserts that excessive force was used on Flowers and that officers violated his rights to due process and to be free from unreasonable search and seizure. He also said they falsely imprisoned him and were negligent.

In an answer to the lawsuit, the city attorney's office admitted that police did not have a paper warrant. The city denied that Flowers was struck after he was handcuffed, but said he was punched while on the ground and kned, and that additional officers had to go inside the home and help get him cuffed.

The city denied that police assaulted Flowers and that the arrest was improper. The city attorney's office said Flowers' damages were caused by his own actions.

The lawsuit follows a complaint Flowers filed last fall with the city's Civil Rights Department and an independent investigation called for by Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges and Police Chief Janée Harteau.

The independent investigation has been completed and the Office of Police Conduct Review has reviewed the case as well, and no discipline has been issued in the case, said Minneapolis police spokesman Scott Seroka.

"My position on this case has never wavered. I fully support the actions of my officers," Harteau said in a statement.

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In this 2014 file photo, Al Flowers directed a meeting of community leaders and police officials about the recent outbreak of violence

Nicole Norfleet covers the fast-paced retail scene including industry giants Target and Best Buy. She previously covered commercial real estate and professional services.

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