



Interfaith Communities United For Justice And Peace

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Religious Communities must stop blessing war and violence!

ICUJP Calls for an End to Police Officer Killing of Unarmed Members of Targeted Communities, and an End to the Militarization of Local Police Departments

Less than three weeks after the officer-involved shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) published its concluding observations on the United States of America's report on its record to uphold the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

CERD listed thirty-six concerns in its report. Three are noted here.

“...the Committee reiterates its previous concern at the brutality and excessive use of force by law enforcement officials against members of racial and ethnic minorities, including against unarmed individuals, which has a disparate impact on African Americans and on undocumented migrants crossing the United States-Mexico border...It also remains concerned that despite the measures taken by the State party to prosecute law enforcement officials for criminal misconduct, impunity for abuses, in particular those committed by the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) against Hispanic/Latino Americans and undocumented migrants, remains a widespread problem.”

“...the Committee remains concerned at the practice of racial profiling of racial or ethnic minorities by law enforcement officials, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Transportation Security Administration, border enforcement officials, and local police...”

“The Committee is concerned at the high number of gun-related deaths and injuries which disproportionately affect members of racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans. It is also concerned at the proliferation of “Stand Your Ground” laws, which are used to circumvent the limits of legitimate self defense in violation of the State party's duty to protect life, and has a disproportionate and discriminatory impact on members of racial and ethnic minorities.”

Michael Brown, an unarmed African American youth, was shot six times, twice in the head, in broad daylight by a white police officer in Ferguson, a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. The community remembers that the police left Michael's body lying uncovered in the street for hours. Residents of Ferguson encountered local police, SWAT teams, riot police, Missouri State Highway Patrol troopers, armored personnel carriers, sharpshooters, police dogs, rubber bullets, tear gas and more as they demonstrated their outrage and grief in the days and weeks following the shooting.

In 2013 ICUJP published a statement in opposition to all forms of violence including the systemic violence caused by institutional racism and racial profiling. The statement supported the End Racial Profiling Act of 2013, sponsored by Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Rep. John Conyers (D-MI).

Police officers, security guards, or self-appointed vigilantes killed at least 313 African Americans in 2012. “In a country where there is an extrajudicial killing of a Black person every 28 hours, we must do all that we can to affirm that Black lives matter.” (Operation Ghetto Storm: 2012 Annual Report on the Extrajudicial Killing of 313 Black People, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, April 7, 2013.)

Congress member Hank Johnson (D-GA) announced the Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act in August shortly after the national news media depicted heavily armed police threatening protestors in Ferguson. Rep. Johnson’s bill would prevent the Defense Department from giving local police automatic weapons, armored vehicles, armored drones and aircraft. The bill states that approximately 12,000 police organizations across the country were able to procure nearly \$500,000,000 worth of excess military merchandise at no charge during fiscal year 2011.

A month to the day after Michael Brown was fatally shot, U.S. Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) called for a hearing on the police use of military equipment in the aftermath of the militarized police response to the demonstrations taking place in her state. During the hearing, Sen. Rand Paul (R-KY.) asked Alan Estevez, Principal Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics, about an NPR investigation that found nearly 12,000 bayonets had been sent to local police through the Department of Defense Excess Property Program (1033 program) from 2006 to 2014.

“Bayonets are available under the program. I can’t answer what a local police force would need a bayonet for,” Estevez said, adding that the states decide what they need.

Ezell Ford, a 25-year-old African American was killed by a Los Angeles police officer on August 11, 2014. Ford was well known in his community. He was diagnosed with a mental illness some years ago. Hundreds of mourners attended Ford’s funeral service, which took place at the First AME Church of Los Angeles on August 30, 2014. Minister Emeritus Rev. Dr. Cecil L. “Chip” Murray gave the eulogy,

“America, oh, America, you're getting richer, but are you now getting a little old for this? We are on trial. The nation, the world, are watching to see what we do. We challenge our law enforcement people, those who are supposed to be our protectors, we challenge you to protect, to walk the walk instead of talking the walk.”

Also attending the service, Congress member Maxine Waters said she feared that all young black men, especially those with special needs, could walk out the door and never come back after confrontations with the police.

In consideration of the above, ICUJP calls for the following remedies at the federal, state, and local levels:

- **Adopt the End Racial Profiling Act.**
- **End the targeted surveillance, including the use of drones in African American and Latino communities.**
- **End racial disparities in the criminal justice system.**
- **End the proliferation of Stand Your Ground laws.**
- **Adopt the Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act.**