



Local Advocates File Report on Police Discrimination in Allegheny County to UN Fact-Finding Body on Law Enforcement and Racial Justice

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In response to the global uprisings protesting the deaths of George Floyd and other people of African descent at the hands of police, the United Nations created the International [Expert Mechanism to Advance Racial Justice and Equality in Law Enforcement](#), also known as the “George Floyd Mechanism” or EMLER. This body will visit the United States April 24-May 5 to conduct fact-finding on systemic racism, including its root causes in law enforcement and the criminal justice system, excessive use of force, racial profiling and other violations of international human rights law by law enforcement officials.

In preparation for the visit, Pittsburgh advocates and researchers teamed up to submit the [“Report on the Treatment of People of African Descent by Law Enforcement Agencies in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Allegheny County”](#) to the UN. The report began by naming the 14 known victims killed in connection with police activity or detention in Allegheny County since 2015—all of whom were Black. It noted that “Half of these deaths fall into one or more of the three policing contexts determined by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights as exceptionally life-threatening for people of African descent— specifically the policing of minor offenses & traffic stops, the deployment of police in situations of mental health crises, and the use of special police operations.”

Report authors cited evidence revealing a “problematic police culture of indifference to both principles of democracy and human rights law,” criticizing the acting police chief’s decision to ignore City Council legislation banning traffic stops for minor violations. Also documented are jarring statistics on the impact of racism in policing and the criminal legal system on Black residents in Allegheny County, especially in Pittsburgh. For example, in 2019 about 70% of all traffic stops, searches and seizures were of Black residents. In addition, the Allegheny County Jail (ACJ) currently holds 68% Black inmates—almost twice state and national average rates, and a rate 3 times higher than expected given the county’s Black population (13%).

Noting that “Public authorities have failed to respond effectively to this substantial evidence of human rights abuses in [the Allegheny County Jail],” the report points out that “these failures ... can be attributed to political structures that tolerate conflicts of interest and invite corruption.” Among the recommendations cited in the report are the removal of ACJ Warden Orlando Harper, a call for the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police to comply with the *United Nations Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials* and related international standards, improved data

collection and transparency, and the advancement of alternatives to police to promote community health and safety.

Alliance for Police Accountability (APA) has long been supporting similar recommendations for improving transparency and accountability in local law enforcement, and helped support the data collection involved in the report. As organizer Kyna James, emphasized, “the monumental abuses, neglect, and lack of accountability in Allegheny County, and around the world are the reasons why the Alliance for Police Accountability (APA) exists. Black and poor people are being killed and jailed at alarming rates. Allowing a badge to shield officers from accountability contributes to racism and systemic oppressions of our people. APA and its members will do everything in our power to survive and challenge human rights abuses. This is non-negotiable. Our mission is and has always been intentional and personal.”

A public panel discussion, ***The World is Watching: Allegheny County’s Discriminatory Policing and Jail Practices Under Scrutiny by the United Nations***, will take place on Monday April 17th, 2023 from 6:00-7:30 PM at the [Hill District Community Engagement Center](#). Panelists include Eduardo “Eddie” Solomon, Allegheny County Policing Project; Bethany Hallam, Allegheny County Councilperson At-Large and Jail Oversight Board Member; Kyna James, Coalition Organizer, Alliance for Police Accountability & Autumn Redcross, Abolitionist Law Project. ([Event flyer](#))