



**Attorney General Chris Carr**

Georgia Office of the Attorney General  
40 Capitol Square Southwest  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Attorney General Carr,

We urge you to withdraw the indictment of Stop Cop City activists, solidarity movement organizers, and 2020 racial justice protesters under the Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO). As national and local civil liberties, human rights, and environmental organizations, we are concerned by the political decision to prosecute a diverse and decentralized protest movement as a criminal conspiracy. The indictment threatens political organizing, protected speech and press freedom,<sup>1</sup> and the right to protest writ large.

If successfully prosecuted, the indictment could set a precedent for criminalizing the type of movement building that civil rights, labor, and other movements have traditionally engaged in to effect social change. Some of the people charged under RICO never met each other, nor coordinated any particular actions. The offenses alleged, including occupying a forest, flyering, and giving false names to police officers are very different types of actions, undertaken with separate objectives and degrees of civil disobedience. Just as it would have been nonsensical to prosecute Morehouse students arrested during civil rights movement sit-ins as conspirators with the organizers of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, this indictment takes the absurd leap of collapsing diverse protests into a masterminded conspiracy simply because the protests share similar goals. By the logic of this indictment, every movement for social change would be a target for criminalization.

In absence of evidence supporting a conspiracy, the RICO indictment instead concocts a conspiracy theory based on ideological affinity. Because no tangible evidence links Molotov cocktails allegedly thrown at the Georgia State Patrol Headquarters in 2020 to protests against the Atlanta Public Safety Training Center proposed over a year later, the indictment instead relies on alleged beliefs held in common. Political ideology, including anarchist political sentiment, is protected under the First Amendment. The indictment treats anarchism, and anarchist organizing, as intrinsically dangerous, suspect, and subject to prosecution.

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<sup>1</sup> "Cop City Indictments Threaten Press Freedom Too," Sept 11, 2023.  
<https://theintercept.com/2023/09/11/cop-city-indictments-protest-press-freedom/>

The decision to charge Atlanta Solidarity Fund organizers is also troubling. Nonprofits and mutual aid organizations routinely provide support to protesters. The alleged offenses committed by organizers with the Atlanta Solidarity Fund include reimbursement for restrooms during an organized week of protest, rain tarps, and camping gear to sustain civil disobedience in the form of occupation of the South River Forest. Throughout the history of civil disobedience and protest for political change, organizations have supported protest by providing for the material needs of protesters. Money-laundering, charity fraud, and RICO charges are intended to dissuade others from supporting the Stop Cop City movement.

The RICO charges are consistent with other prosecutorial decisions to intimidate the political movement into silence through overcharging, selective prosecution, and lack of predictability. As in previous local decisions to charge protesters who might otherwise face only minor charges with domestic terrorism, charges under RICO represent selective use of rarely invoked statutes to intimidate activists and silence political dissent.

In an emblematic example, the RICO indictment includes three people arrested for distributing flyers on the sidewalk. These activists believed they were acting within the parameters of First Amendment-protected activity and took steps to ensure they were acting within the law, including posting flyers on the outside of mailboxes rather than within mailboxes, which they believed could violate postal laws.<sup>2</sup> Police arrested the three activists for the content of the flyers, charging them with felony intimidation of an officer of the state because the flyers called one of the state troopers involved in the killing of environmental activist Manuel “Tortuguita” Terán a murderer. We assert that distributing these flyers is purely First Amendment activity. The three activists spent almost four days in jail<sup>3</sup> and now face up to twenty years in prison if convicted under RICO. Overcharging activists under RICO seems intended to deter protest and instill fear among activists.

As national and local civil society organizations who rely on the First Amendment to do our work, we are profoundly troubled by the decision to prosecute activists and organizers under RICO. Overcharging alleged offenses as a conspiracy chills First Amendment-protected activity and tars political speech as intrinsically violence prone, casting aspersions upon the Stop Cop City movement as a whole. As a matter of democratic necessity, we urge you to drop this selective prosecution of political dissidents.

If there are any questions about this letter, please contact Cody Bloomfield at [cody@rightsanddissent.org](mailto:cody@rightsanddissent.org).

Signed,  
Defending Rights & Dissent  
18 Million Rising

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<sup>2</sup> “Cop City Protesters Face Felonies for Flyering as Police Repress Student Sit-Ins,” May 8, 2023. <https://truthout.org/articles/cop-city-protesters-face-felonies-for-flyering-as-police-repress-student-sit-ins/>

<sup>3</sup> “Latest arrests of ‘Cop City’ protesters ‘feel like overreach’, experts say,” May 13, 2023. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/may/13/cop-city-activists-arrests-georgia-law>

Adalah Justice Project  
Alyssa Rodriguez Center for Gender Justice  
Amazon Watch  
Amnesty International USA  
Amplify Resonance  
Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)  
Black Political Cultivation AZ  
Brave Technology Co-Op  
Carceral Tech Resistance Network  
Catalyst Project  
Center for Constitutional Rights  
Center for Human Rights and Privacy  
Center for Public Integrity  
Central Ohio Freedom Fund  
Central Valley Islamic Council  
Chainless Change, Inc.  
Civil Liberties Defense Center  
Climate Defense Project  
Coalition for Civil Freedoms  
Columbus Safety Collective  
Community Justice Project, Inc.  
Community Movement Builders  
Demand Progress  
Direct Action Everywhere  
Divest/Invest RGV  
DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving  
Democratic Socialists of America - Rio Grande Valley  
Equality Labs  
Equity and Transformation  
Fight for the Future  
First Amendment Coalition  
Forest Keeper  
Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression  
Freedom BLOC  
Freedom of the Press Foundation  
Freedom To Thrive  
Friends of Big Ivy  
Friends of Human Rights  
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance  
Greenpeace USA  
Habari Ummah  
Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program  
InterReligious Task Force on Central America  
James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership

Jewish Voice for Peace  
Jewish Voice for Peace - Bay Area Chapter  
Juvenile Justice Coalition  
Lavender Phoenix  
Law Office of Moira Meltzer-Cohen  
March for Our Lives  
Movement for Black Lives  
Muslim Advocates  
Muslim Justice League  
Muslims for Just Futures  
National Coalition Against Censorship  
National Lawyers Guild  
National Lawyers Guild Mass Defense Steering Committee  
National Lawyers Guild, Detroit & Michigan Chapter  
New Voices for Reproductive Justice  
NLG-Madison  
Oakland Privacy  
Ohio Families Unite Against Police Brutality  
Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and Change  
Ohio Women's Alliance  
Oil and Gas Action Network  
Organizing Black  
Palestine Legal  
PEN America  
Project South  
Queer Crescent  
Rainforest Action Network  
Respond Crisis Translation  
Restore The Fourth  
Right to the City Alliance  
Rising Majority  
RootsAction.org  
Secure Justice  
Showing Up for Racial Justice  
South Texans for Reproductive Justice  
South Texas Environmental Justice Network  
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project  
Texas Youth Activist Alliance  
The CLEAR Project  
The Love We Dont See  
TSU- Texas Staff Union  
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights  
Women Watch Afrika, Inc.  
Yalla Indivisible