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LDF Raises Serious Concerns About Recent Arrest of Atlanta Solidarity Fund Members in Cop City Advocacy and Calls for DOJ Investigation

On May 31, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation announced that law enforcement officials raided the Atlanta Solidarity Fund, arresting and charging three of its staff with charity fraud and money laundering.

In response, Legal Defense Fund (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai S. Nelson issued the following statement:

“We are deeply concerned about the apparent targeting of Atlanta Solidarity Fund members, Marlon Kautz, Savannah Patterson, and Adele Maclean, particularly in light of Magistrate Judge James Altman’s recent criticism of the evidence presented by the State against them, which he decried as unimpressive in today’s bail hearing. The actions of Atlanta and Georgia authorities risk intimidating those who oppose the urban warfare training facility widely known as Cop City. We hope the Atlanta Police Foundation, its corporate supporters, and law enforcement officials in Georgia will be subject to the same exacting scrutiny and standards to which the Solidarity Fund is being subjected.

“The discretionary misuse of law enforcement to surveil, intimidate, and criminalize those who seek to change the status quo has long precedent in the civil rights movement. The recent labeling of environmental activists opposing Cop City as domestic terrorists raises the same alarm. The 2017 passage of a state domestic terrorism statute has permitted a broad array of activity to be criminalized as terrorism and has been used by local and Georgia officials to label individuals, especially those who oppose Cop City, as terrorists.

“These unsavory practices are a prelude of what law enforcement will be empowered to pursue with even more resources should Cop City come to pass. As the tragic killing of Manuel Esteban Paez Terán, or Tortugueta, has underscored, law enforcement interactions can lead to decreased public safety. The project of Cop City will continue to weaponize law enforcement against the most vulnerable members of the Atlanta community, especially those who oppose militarized policing and the many who are working to build a public safety system that keeps communities safe and free from police violence.

“We echo the demand reverberating across Georgia, and the nation, that Cop City must not be constructed and we call on the Department of Justice to conduct an immediate investigation into the arrest and apparent targeting of Atlanta Solidarity Fund members.”

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.