

# Abolish the Police, Abolish the Military, Abolish ICE: Dismantle Systems of Oppression

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Global Research, June 10, 2020

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

*In this crucial moment, all of us who desire change should begin to think very carefully about a unified message and a coherent, organizing principle in the fight against endemic racism and police brutality in this country. I believe the message should be simple, yet radical: a complete abolition of the police in this nation.*

There are many reasons for this stance. Police violence against black communities has gone on for so long, with no signs of abatement, and very few cases of prosecution and significant jail time even when the evidence is overwhelming and incontrovertible.

I do not believe police reform is a reasonable expectation when police (even minority police officers) have been trained for decades to shoot first, ask questions later. I do not believe a reformed police system would be ready to relinquish their military grade weapons, equipment, and automobiles. I do not believe in any reform that keeps officers armed is worthy of our time. Now is not the time for incremental reform, because no one else should die because our criminal justice system is too slow, bureaucratic, and spineless to react in time. Our nation should be pushing for sweeping change.

Recent statistics indicate US police have killed over 8,000 civilians since 2000, while in countries such as Norway, Iceland, and Finland, who all have 2-3 years of police training with much higher qualifications compared to around 6 months in the US have killed between 1-3 people each in the same time frame. No one can reasonably claim US citizens are thousands of times more violent and dangerous than civilians elsewhere, the problem obviously lies in the gun-slinging response of the police forces.

It does not matter if you “know a good cop.” Policing entails following strict orders to protect private property, which necessarily entails harassing people for the most petty of reasons. The severe enforcement of property ownership means the police are the first line of defense in propping up the unjust, immoral system we toil under which goes by the name of capitalism. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and the police are the muscle to ensure that it stays that way. Any time “riots” and “looting” threatens property relations, you will not find the one-percenters out in front of their businesses ready to defend them, but you will see police ready to “uphold the law.”

George Floyd ultimately was murdered over a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. Police are authoritarians at best, fascists and white supremacists at worst. They are not here to protect and serve you or your community: rather the function of police is to preserve law and order, at all costs. The motto is to shoot first, ask questions later.

Of course it's worth bringing up one of the most famous icons the police use, as seen on T-shirts, bumper stickers, and as tattoos: The Punisher. For those who don't know, The Punisher is a children's comic book character, a mentally unstable vigilante who kills "bad guys" but also innocents who get in his way when he is enraged. Much like The Punisher, many US police view themselves as the law: they see their role as the judge, jury, and executioner all in one.

City councils in Minneapolis are already grappling with how to govern in a post-police world, and we should encourage a national conversation. Most calls to the police are for substance abuse problems, medical emergencies, domestic issues, property complaints, simple things like theft or selling drugs, and many calls are made by those who are frankly scared of anyone different from them; usually the homeless, people with mental illnesses, minorities, or anyone who doesn't appear to "belong" in a particular area.

Many large cities allocate between 25-40% of their discretionary funding to policing. By completely defunding the police and diverting those resources into various public sectors, counselors can respond to drug and substance problems, mental health professionals can help those in need, public education can help alleviate virulent racism, etc. For serious emergencies involving violence or its threat, community/neighborhood groups can be trained formed with an emergency number, and response times would be much faster without the threat of deadly force. More resources can be put towards affordable housing for all, universal jobs programs, ending homelessness, and ending the wage gaps between minorities and whites.

The function of the police domestically mirrors the function of the military abroad. There are plenty of authoritarian leaders and dictators around the world, but if they ally with the US, buy our weapons, and let our corporations plunder their resources and exploit their workers, they are not deemed a threat to US "national security." However, if the leadership is defiant towards the will of the US, they are suddenly declared a threat to the world, tyrants, sponsors of terrorism, etc. The military does not defend our freedoms; their main function is to carry out the imperial and capitalist agenda which necessarily involves the destruction of black and brown bodies all over the globe as well as the wanton extermination of ecosystems. Since 1945, our military is responsible for the deaths of tens of millions of innocent people around the world.

It is absolutely possible to absolutely defund and abolish the active military, which is an imperial standing army, and replace it with citizens' militias and regional self-defense organizations. The US, due to its huge amount of weaponry and armed citizens, would not be vulnerable to the sorts of attacks from other major countries. Further, the 750+ billion dollars a year devoted to the military could be given to the poor as well as social programs and infrastructure to create renewable energy, peaceful technology to improve housing and transportation, and sustainable farming methods, which will become paramount as we continue into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Likewise, the function of ICE is to terrorize undocumented immigrants and to satiate the delusions of hard-right conservatives who believe "illegal" workers are stealing the jobs of US citizens and somehow are a threat to the "American way of life", whatever that means. The threat of ICE raids and deportation keep undocumented workers from obtaining necessary things like licenses, insurances, etc., and also keeps the undocumented from getting medical treatment even with life-threatening conditions. The truth is there are

enough jobs, resources, and money for everyone in the US; and those who argue otherwise are simply ignorant or under the spell of elite ideology. This false consciousness is a form of brainwashing, which seeks to divide and conquer by pitting ordinary peoples against each other in order to distract from the systematic looting and pillaging engaged in by multinational corporations, domestic policing regimes which murder African-Americans in plain sight, and a military which engages in genocide to sustain imperial military hegemony and has continually committed the worst crimes against humanity over the past 75 years.

These are extremely unpleasant truths but they are necessary to reflect on in order to understand US foreign policy and capitalist political economy. The murder of George Floyd and many others domestically are connected to the stillborn child delivered to an Iraqi woman whose village was contaminated with depleted uranium, to the child in Yemen who starves to death after his family was obliterated in a US drone strike, to the swollen belly of a child laborer mining Coltan for our cell phones, to the widow in Colombia whose husband was killed on their rural farm by US-backed death squads.

If we can begin to face the horrors the US has inflicted on the world, as well as each other, the first steps can be taken to reflect, grieve, and grapple with our barbaric treatment towards minorities and brutal history as a nation. Deep introspection will be necessary to reconcile with our past and connect the dots to the ongoing violence at home and abroad. Public opinion is shifting significantly, and there are encouraging signs that the protests can sustain themselves and become a national uprising. Now more than ever, the world must stand in solidarity with the protesters and organize twice as well to tackle the crisis of racist police violence in the midst of the global pandemic.

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