



UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

1331 PENNSYLVANIA AVE, NW, SUITE 1150, WASHINGTON, DC 20425 www.usccr.gov

August 15, 2014

The Honorable Eric H. Holder, Jr.
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Holder:

The United States Commission on Civil Rights (hereafter “the Commission”) has profound concerns regarding the recent and continuing events in Ferguson, Missouri, and urge strong and bold action by the Department to protect the civil rights of the citizens of Ferguson.

We understand that the Department has opened an investigation into the police shooting death of Michael Brown, who witnesses say was an unarmed African American man. We strongly support your Department’s inquiry into the circumstances of his shooting. We also commend the efforts of the Department’s Community Relations Service to work with city officials and the community to help calm tensions in Ferguson.

We urge the Department to insist on full transparency and disclosure by the Ferguson police department to the citizens of Ferguson on all aspects of the investigation. In addition, we are also concerned about reports of other potential violations of civil liberties and civil rights in Ferguson over the past few days. Tear gas attacks, mass arrests, and assaults on accredited journalists do not respect the right of assembly and the First Amendment rights of the press. They are wholly inappropriate in our democracy. Consequently, we strongly urge that the Department and the local U.S. Attorney’s office are empowered to take whatever steps are necessary and appropriate to protect the constitutional rights of the citizens of Ferguson.

In addition, we request that the Justice Department examine the apparent lack of representation of the City’s majority African American community in the police department and local government. If media reports are correct that there are only 3 African American police officers in the Ferguson police force and only 1 African American city councilman out of 6, we believe this warrants intensive and close scrutiny by the Civil Rights Division. The disproportionate lack of representation in the police force and local government are not only a cause of concern, but may be related, directly or indirectly, to the tension between concerned citizens and local government.

Letter to Attorney General Eric H. Holder, Jr.

August 15, 2014

Page 2 of 2

We applaud the statements made by President Obama on August 14, 2014. All Americans are concerned with the events in Ferguson and desire that justice be done in accordance with fundamental principles of civil liberties and civil rights.

Sincerely,



Chairman Martin R. Castro



Commissioner Roberta Achtenberg



Commissioner David Kladney



Commissioner Michael Yaki



Commissioner Patricia Timmons-Goodson



Commissioner Karen Narasaki

*Approved by a majority of the members of the Commission as of August 15, 2014