

The Portland Police Attack: ACLU Files Lawsuit. Sues Trump and City of Portland

By [ACLU](#)

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PORTLAND, Ore. — Multiple volunteer street medics are suing the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Marshals Service, and the City of Portland for targeting and attacking them at Portland protests against police brutality. The lawsuit was filed in federal court by the American Civil Liberties Union Foundation of Oregon and Perkins Coie LLP.

In well-documented incidents, police and federal agents brutally attacked volunteer medics with rubber bullets, tear gas, pepper spray, batons, and flash-bangs.

“It was terrifying,” said Savannah Guest, a volunteer medic and plaintiff in the case who was seen in a [viral video](#) being attacked by federal agents while providing aid to an incapacitated bystander. “Every human being deserves help, but the federal agents showed no humanity or concern.”

The lawsuit argues that the law enforcement attacks on medics violates the First and Fourth Amendments. The ACLU of Oregon will also seek a court order prohibiting law enforcement from targeting and attacking medics again.

“Volunteer medics should be celebrated, not attacked or arrested,” said Jann Carson, interim executive director of the ACLU of Oregon. “Our clients are volunteering day and night to provide aid to the injured and to create a safer environment for protesters and bystanders. These attacks are unconscionable as well as unconstitutional. This lawlessness must end.”

This is the second lawsuit the ACLU of Oregon has filed against the City of Portland and the Trump administration for abuses at the nightly protests against police brutality. A court order secured through the previous lawsuit blocks local law enforcement attacks on journalists and legal observers. A motion to add federal agents to that order is currently pending before the court, with arguments scheduled for Thursday, July 23.

“The Trump Administration and Portland Police Bureau wax poetic about their concerns about lawlessness — but they are responsible for it,” said Shane Grannum, attorney at Perkins Coie. “They have violated the constitutional rights of our clients to protest and lend medical services, supplies, and treatment to protesters. Our clients have been tear gassed, pepper sprayed, beaten, and shot with rubber bullets, even while administering care to injured protesters. This lawsuit seeks to ensure that the Trump Administration and Portland Police will be held accountable for their violent, lawless, and unconstitutional actions.”

Militarized federal agents deployed by the Trump administration have been terrorizing the city, threatening lives, and relentlessly attacking people exercising their First Amendment

right to protest police brutality. Federal and local law enforcement have fired tear gas, rubber bullets, and more indiscriminately into crowds, and have been brutally attacking journalists, legal observers, and medics.

“When protest medics are rendering aid to protest attendees and innocent bystanders, they are exercising their right to free speech,” said Rian Peck, attorney at Perkins Coie. “At the core of their message: Police violence and brutality will not deter protesters from using their voice to demand change in policing practices. For as long as the protests continue, our clients intend to continue exercising their right to deliver that message.”

Below are additional comments from plaintiffs:

Christopher Wise, a volunteer medic who, while wearing clothes prominently displaying red crosses, was targeted by police and federal agents with rubber bullets, flash-bang grenades, pepper bullets, riot batons, and tear gas: “The first night I went to a protest I saw someone severely injured by police. As someone with EMT training, I knew how to help. Since then, I’ve volunteered as a medic almost every night to show my support for the protests. Black lives matter; my life matters. We have to keep saying it until people understand it. I act as a protest medic because I believe what people have to say is important, and no one should be forced to stop saying it with these protests.”

Christopher “Kit” Durkee, a volunteer medic who was seen being attacked alongside plaintiff Savannah Guest by federal agents in a [viral video](#): “Who do you call to report this? Who can hold these agents accountable for misconduct?”

Michael Martinez, a graduate student at Oregon Health & Science University who was arrested while packing up the OHSU medic tent after protesters were gassed and beaten on the night of June 13: “I filed this lawsuit because many people in this country, such as George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, will never have their day in court. I feel it’s all the more important to use whatever resources and power I have to confront this abhorrent system, which allows people in America, primarily Black people, to be beaten and killed by police without consequence.”

The lawsuit was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Oregon, Portland Division. The lawsuit also seeks damages for injuries sustained.

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