

U.S. Sen. Baldwin calls for investigation into Minneapolis police department

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) joined Minnesota Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Tina Smith (D-MN), along with 25 colleagues, in calling on the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ) to conduct an investigation into the patterns and practices of racially discriminatory and violent policing in the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD).

Baldwin, Klobuchar and Smith were joined by Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Ed Markey (D-MA), Tom Carper (D-DE), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Chris Coons (D-DE), Jack Reed (D-RI), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Jon Tester (D-MT), Dick Durbin (D-IL), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Bob Casey (D-PA), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Michael Bennet (D-CO), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Gary Peters (D-MI), and Chris Murphy (D-CT).

“Given the repeated instances of police violence that have resulted in the deaths of several citizens—a disproportionate share of whom have been black men—we ask that the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department conduct an investigation into the patterns and practices of racially discriminatory and violent policing in the MPD. The Department should also be prepared to use the strongest tools available—including the use of court-supervised consent decrees—to ensure oversight, enforcement, and accountability on an ongoing basis,” **the lawmakers wrote.**

“Those responsible must be held accountable to the fullest extent of the law in order to serve justice for George Floyd and his loved ones. And we must work toward justice for the community, which means ensuring that the MPD accounts for and eliminates any unconstitutional police practices. It is imperative that the Department of Justice do its part toward that end.”

Dear Attorney General Barr:

We write to request that the Department of Justice work with state and local officials to investigate the death of George Floyd and to immediately open an investigation to evaluate unconstitutional patterns and practices of violent policing targeting communities of color in the Minneapolis Police Department that contributed to Mr. Floyd’s tragic and unjust death on May 25, 2020.

Video taken by several witnesses shows that George Floyd—who is black and was unarmed—was handcuffed and pinned to the ground by a police officer who held his knee against Mr. Floyd’s neck as he pleaded for his life. Mr. Floyd was on the ground repeatedly telling the officer that he could not breathe, and despite that fact that bystanders are heard on video begging the officer to relent, he did not remove his knee from Mr. Floyd’s neck until after an ambulance arrived. Eventually Mr. Floyd loses consciousness; he was pronounced dead after being transported to a local hospital.

The City of Minneapolis has fired the officers involved and has requested that the Federal Bureau of Investigation review the incident along with local authorities. But that is not enough. Given the repeated instances of police violence that have resulted in the deaths of several citizens—a disproportionate share of whom have been black men—we ask that the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department conduct an investigation into the patterns and practices of racially discriminatory and violent policing in the MPD. The Department should also be prepared to use the strongest tools available—including the use of court-supervised consent decrees—to ensure oversight, enforcement, and accountability on an ongoing basis.

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