



For Immediate Release
Wednesday, January 10, 2024

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LDF Issues Statement on One Year Anniversary of Tyre Nichols' Death

Today marks the one-year-anniversary of the brutal killing of Tyre Nichols by Memphis Police Department Officers that were part of the Scorpion unit, a now disbanded specialized unit with a track record of abuses.

The Memphis Police Department currently remains under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). Four officers involved in the killing of Mr. Nichols face multiple charges, including for second-degree murder, aggravated assault, the deprivation of rights under color of law resulting in death and the willful disregarding of medical needs resulting in death, and are awaiting trial in federal and state court. An additional officer is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty in both courts. The DOJ issued [guidance](#) urging law enforcement to assess the need for specialized units and calling for increased accountability measures.

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

“We send our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Tyre Nichols on this solemn anniversary. The brutal killing of Mr. Nichols by law enforcement is a tragic reminder that police contact too often results in violence and death disproportionately visited upon Black communities. We must continue to work to replace our current system of public safety with one that respects dignity and life while protecting and serving communities with excellence. The failures and dangers of policing in this country that led to Mr. Nichols' death persist today in the form of specialized crime-suppression units that continue to harm communities and in the traffic stops that all too frequently lead to escalations of fatal police violence. We have seen enough.

“We appreciate the Department of Justice's commitment towards holding specialized units accountable, and for investigating the formation of these units. We also appreciate the forthcoming guidance to mayors and police chiefs to scrutinize specialized units. While this is a welcome start, we recognize there is a need for deeper, more fundamental changes to policing. As we have [stated](#), highly specialized crime suppression units do not increase safety, and are in fact a counter-productive solution to violence.

“In order to ensure that the heinous events that led to the loss of Tyre Nichols never recur, we once again renew our call to disband these specialized units, develop alternatives to armed responses to traffic stops, and prioritize instituting a public safety system that invests in the health of communities such as that outlined in LDF's [Framework for Public Safety](#). Until we take meaningful steps to replace the current system of law enforcement with a just system of public

safety, we dishonor Tyre Nichols and the countless victims of deadly police violence whose lives mattered.”

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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 wholly 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.