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LDF Responds to Murder Charges for the Five Former Police Officers Involved in the Killing of Tyre Nichols

Today, five former Memphis Police Department officers were charged for their conduct in a brutal assault on Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old Black man, who died three days after the attack. Each of the officers have been charged with one count of second-degree murder, one count of aggravated assault, two counts of aggravated kidnapping, two counts of official misconduct, and one count of official oppression. The officers had already been fired for excessive use of force, failing to intervene, and failing to render aid. Two Memphis Fire Department personnel were also relieved of duty following an internal investigation. The U.S. Department of Justice has opened a civil rights investigation through the U.S. Attorney's office and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The Tennessee Bureau of Investigation is also investigating this incident.

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

"Our hearts go out to the Nichols family, who should not be grieving the loss of their son, brother, and father today.

"Another traffic encounter with law enforcement led to officers violently taking the life of a Black person. Tyre Nichols' death, at the hands of the Memphis Police Department, is a tragedy that has torn a father from his son and has left an entire community in extreme anguish. Despite protests and updated policies, police continue to kill excessively. The facts of this incident deeply pain us, and we stand in solidarity with those who are demanding accountability.

"The death of Mr. Nichols reflects an incorrigible law enforcement culture of violence that infects far too many actors, regardless of their race. We must remove law enforcement officers from traffic enforcement, and expand the authority of existing agencies, or develop new agencies, to respond to traffic incidents in a non-violent and humane manner. Many cities across the country have taken steps towards implementing civilian responders for traffic incidents. Memphis officials must take similar steps to prevent this violence from occurring in the first place."

Additionally, LDF Associate Director-Counsel Tona Boyd issued the following statement:

"Tyre Nichols' life should have never been cut short by law enforcement. Charging these officers for their role in his death is a critically important step, and we hope the ongoing prosecution will be handled with transparency and result in full accountability. But none of this will undo Mr. Nichols' death or assuage the pain and despair felt by his family and that reverberates through Memphis and across the nation. Far too many times we've seen communities torn apart when

law enforcement officers end the lives of Black people, and we must urgently turn to implementing important reforms that we know will save lives.

“We urge officials to protect and respect those exercising their First Amendment right to peacefully protest and air legitimate grievances surrounding this tragic incident.”

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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 completely 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.