

Coalition of Civil Rights Leaders Condemn Horrible Attack on Ahmaud Arbery

NAACP, National Urban League, NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, and the National Action Network (NAN) today released the following joint statement in response to the recent killing of Ahmaud Arbery:

The video we have all seen does not show a citizen's arrest. It shows an execution.

It is clear that law enforcement authorities must immediately arrest the McMichaels for this crime. The failure to hold these two individuals accountable for the killing of Mr. Arbery would mean that white citizens may hunt down an unarmed, non-violent Black man in broad daylight and kill him with impunity. Nothing in Georgia law licenses this conduct. The McMichaels must stand trial for this killing.

Any legitimate handling of this case begins with an independent investigation. This case has already passed through the offices of three different District Attorneys, each of whom has demonstrated their inability to handle this matter with independence and respect for Mr. Arbery's family. This matter cries out for an independent, credible investigator to lead a team that will uncover the truth of the events leading up to the killing of Mr. Arbery. The recent statement by District Attorney Durden announcing his plan to empanel a grand jury will only delay this matter. By Governor's Kemp's Executive Order, no grand juries will sit until June. Moreover, Mr. Durden has the authority to recommend the arrest of the McMichaels, and he should do so without delay.

"This video appears to show two white men literally hunting and killing an unarmed Black man. It is a savage act that demands resolute legal action by state and federal officials. Unfortunately, weeks have been wasted as this case has been passed around between District Attorney's offices," said **Sherrilyn Ifill**, President and Director-Counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF). "We need Governor Kemp to appoint an independent attorney or assistant Attorney General to handle the investigation and prosecution of this case, and we need federal authorities to investigate the possibility that this case violates our federal hate crime statute. We stand with the family of Ahmaud Arbery as they deal with the incalculable grief of seeing their son's life taken from him, and as they seek justice on his behalf."

"This incident is reminiscent of an atrocious era of hate and domestic terrorism where police officers and white protesters routinely brutalized African-Americans. The fact that Gregory McMichael and his son Travis McMichael have not been arrested and held without bond in the senseless killing of Ahmaud Arbery is despicable and displays the continuance of systematic racism and privilege granted to white people in America when Black bodies are at the epicenter," said **Derrick Johnson**, President and CEO of the NAACP.

"National Action Network and I have been on this case at the request of the attorney and family of Ahmaud Arbery and we've called for an immediate independent investigation into his horrific killing. The video shows the blatant execution of Ahmaud-- an unarmed Black man, mercilessly shot in an inhumane way while jogging, and for two months, the case has been neglected and passed around by prosecutors. We will continue to stand with his family while calling for federal intervention and state accountability until justice is achieved," said **Rev. Al Sharpton**, President of National Action Network (NAN).

"The shock and horror of Ahmaud's death is only compounded by the district attorney's inexcusable failure to act," said **Marc H. Morial**, President and CEO of the National Urban League. "Our hearts are with Ahmaud's family and his community and we support them in their search for justice."

"The family and the public deserve a full, fair and independent investigation into the tragic killing of Ahmaud Arbery," said **Kristen Clarke**, president and executive director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law. "The killing of Mr. Arbery harkens back to the Jim Crow era when Black men were murdered by white mobs with impunity and rarely brought to justice. We urge immediate intervention by an independent prosecutor or by the U.S. Department of Justice to determine if this matter constitutes a violation of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act or other federal law."

We call on the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Georgia to open an investigation to determine whether any federal statutes have been violated, including the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

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Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation's first civil and human rights law organization. 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. 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 NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF.

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