

Judith Palmer Testimony

On the afternoon of May 31, I learned of a large police presence on 52nd Street. Having heard about the extreme use of force by police at protests earlier that weekend, I decided to be a witness in case the situation on 52nd Street escalated. I left my home on 54th and Catherine at around 4:45pm, and, shortly after, I saw a large armored tank travel down 52nd Street toward Locust Street. As I was recording, two officers approached me. One officer looked at me recording and then, without warning, shot me in the leg with a rubber bullet. No one in the area was engaged in dangerous or disruptive activities. I was afraid that I would be shot again if I continued to document police activity, so I returned home. The bullet left a lump that continued for several weeks, and was still visible three months later.

The police cannot be trusted with weapons like pepper spray and rubber bullets, or any tactics banned by international law, and they should surrender all military hardware obtained through the Department of Defense. We are not enemy combatants! Moreover, the city is responsible for holding police accountable. We need drastically increased transparency about complaints against police and subsequent investigations, and we need the city to prioritize preparations for grievance arbitration, where violent cops so often get discipline overturned, and for interest arbitration, where police pile up protections and loopholes that benefit them at the expense of the residents of Philadelphia.