



Lemkin Institute Statement on the Police Murder of Keenen Anderson in Los Angeles, USA

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention condemns the murder of Keenan Anderson by Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) on January 3, 2023. Anderson, who was a father and 10th grade English teacher visiting LA from Washington, DC, had been in a traffic accident and called police for help. When police arrived, multiple officers chased him, pinned him down, and repeatedly tased him, at one time for 30 seconds straight. Anderson died a few hours later at a hospital as a direct consequence of police brutality.

According to witnesses, Anderson was terrified. He cried out to onlookers, "Please help me," and said the officers were "trying to kill me." He also shouted the name of George Floyd, the African American man whose murder by Minneapolis police in May 2020 was caught on 8 minutes and 46 seconds of terrifying video.

Anderson was the sixtieth person killed by police in the United States in 2023 (as of January 19, 2023). He was the third man killed by the LAPD in the 48 hours around January 3. Each of those men was having a mental health crisis. Each was a person of color. Nationwide US police killed 1,176 people in 2022, the highest number in at least a decade. According to the Mapping Police Violence Project, black people are 2.9 times more likely to be killed by police than white people.

The United States has a long history of using police forces to oppress black Americans. The institution of policing itself in the US dates back to the slave patrols of the early 18th century. US police forces have been the most enduring single institution of anti-black racism in the country, enforcing slavery, Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, and, since the 1960s, the over-policing of black neighborhoods. David Brooks, writing in the Atlantic in 2020, has called US policing "a cultural regime of dehumanization."

Despite growing criticism of police brutality in the US, political leaders in all branches of government continue to demonstrate blind support for law enforcement.

The consequence of blind support for law enforcement that exists among American legislators and government officials is impunity for the use of lethal state force against civilians, particularly

people of color and other marginalized communities, such as LGBTQ+ people, disabled people, and undocumented immigrants. The Lemkin Institute points out that impunity within a state's security sector is one of the primary enablers of mass atrocity, including genocide. It is also a principal vehicle for the overthrow of democratic institutions and a principal tool of authoritarian control. The impunity afforded US police officers is an important driver of the United States' lurch towards fascism.

The Lemkin Institute rejects the falsehood pushed by American policy makers that nothing can be done about police brutality against people of color. Such an argument, which one hears from both political parties, is simply an excuse to ignore the enduring violence of white supremacy while protecting the benefits that it offers most of the people currently in power in the country. Political leaders need to have the courage, and the morality, to recognize that the United States has pursued a failed model not only of policing, but also of governance, especially since the peak of the racist War on Drugs in the 1980s, when U.S. incarceration rates began their swift increase.

The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention calls on the people of the United States to actively build a society of care rather than a society of punishment. The LAPD received \$1.8 billion in funding from the city of Los Angeles taxpayers in 2022, which was 29 times higher than the city's housing budget. No society is sustainable when it relies so greatly on state force and offers so little social responsibility.

We believe that there are many traditions within the diverse and complex culture of the United States that can support a robust and positive transformation of structures and institutions towards greater justice, stronger community, and respect for life. We implore the people of the United States to draw on those strengths going forward.