

DON'T BE A

Copagandist!

#StopCopCity Indictments

A Resource for Media Covering Atlanta Indictments



If you are covering the recent indictments of #StopCopCity organizers in Atlanta, please refrain from simply repeating the unproven allegations and narrative spun by the indictments filed by the prosecution – in other words, *Don't Be a Copagandist*.

Please be aware of the following when covering this story:

 ***Nothing in the indictment has been proven***

The document filed in Fulton County court has not been verified by anyone. It simply tells a story of what the Georgia Attorney General wants us to believe happened, including many contested facts, allegations, extrapolations, and baseless conclusions. The fact that an indictment was issued simply means that a group of 23 people agreed that the Georgia Attorney General should get a chance to try to prove his story. That's it.

Unfortunately, the consequences of the indictments are very real – people charged are facing vigilante violence, have had their bank accounts frozen or closed, lost jobs and educational opportunities, and are having trouble finding housing, all because of unproven allegations and draconian charges against them.



The grand jury process is highly secretive and relies exclusively on the prosecution's version of events

The prosecutor/attorney general completely controls the grand jury process – including which witnesses and evidence are presented, and how they are framed. While both the judge and grand jurors have the right to ask questions, they rarely do, and are actively discouraged from doing so when they do. As a general rule, no evidence that contradicts the prosecutor's story is heard by the grand jurors. Neither defendants nor defense counsel are permitted to appear, testify, or challenge the prosecutor's version of events, nor are transcripts made available to the public.



The indictment is built on lies.

- **The police have offered no concrete evidence that Manuel "Tortuguita" Paez Teran possessed a weapon or shot at anyone, much less a police officer – no gun was found on them or nearby, and their killing has been ruled a homicide by DeKalb County Medical Examiner. Yet the indictment repeatedly cites a single statement in an anonymous video posted online to claim otherwise.**
- **The indictment falsely claims that the Department of Homeland Security has deemed the movement to Stop Cop City a group of "Domestic Violent Extremists."** In fact, the DHS bulletin cited by the indictment refers to "alleged DVEs" and allegations made by the Attorney General – in other words, the AG's office is citing its own claims as evidence for them.
- **There is no group or coalition called "Defend the Atlanta Forest" – there are simply social media accounts that use that name. There is therefore no "group" that is being financially supported by the Atlanta Solidarity Fund to engage in unlawful activity.**

The indictment includes a long laundry list of reimbursements (most for amounts under \$100) to individuals for purchases of innocuous materials that could be found in any household, including tarps, camping supplies, tools, and kitchen supplies, in an attempt to paint a blatantly false picture of of an organized criminal enterprise.



This is a political prosecution, an attempt to indict a movement

The indictment dates the beginning of the claimed conspiracy May 25, 2020, the day George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis Police Department, sparking protests against police violence and for racial justice across the country. The language of the indictment casts an incredibly wide net, attempting to connect the claimed conspiracy to “demonstrations centered around a message of anti-police violence that arose from a spate of high-profile nationwide police shootings” following Floyd’s murder – which drew over over 20 million everyday people across the country into the streets on a single day in June 2020.

In other words, this indictment seeks to frame an entire movement challenging the violence of policing as a criminal enterprise, and any critique of police violence as evidence of criminal conspiracy.

The indictment suggests that everyday practices of neighbors helping neighbors and people sharing resources with each other are somehow evidence of wrongdoing, referencing “mutual aid,” “solidarity,” and collective approaches as somehow associated with violent intent. Even worse, in a document that is clearly written as a public relations tool designed to sway opinion in a hotly contested fight to #StopCopCity, the Attorney General engages in a transparent attempt to isolate and drive a wedge between a popular, decentralized movement of community organizers resisting construction of a police training facility in a forest in the middle of a city and the public by painting a picture of opponents of Cop City as a powerful group whose ultimate goal is to force everyone to give everything they have up to a nebulous yet nefarious “collective.”

The indictment is also a blatant attempt to discredit the Atlanta Solidarity Fund and other protest-related bail funds by describing eligibility requirements as loyalty oaths – while simultaneously chastising them for not paying bail for “indigent” pre-trial detainees.



Prosecutors are attempting to criminalize commonly used communication channels and community organizing activities and financial practices.

The indictment explicitly cites the following every day activities as evidence of criminal intent:

- the use of the internet to share ideas,
- the use of common communication channels such as **in person communication**, websites, Signal, Twitter, Telegram, Tor, VPNs, and common vehicles for sharing information and perspectives including press conferences, calls to action, flyer, and publishing 'zines,
- the use of common forms and practices of protest, such as letter writing campaigns, calling and promoting weeks of action, occupations, and keeping the number of an attorney handy in the event of potential arrest, and
- the use of common financial practices, such as reimbursements for supplies, meals, and trainings.

In fact, under the broad brush the Attorney General is using to paint every day activities and community organizing as evidence of criminal enterprise, documents like the one you are reading right now could be cited in the next indictment as evidence of criminal intent.

***For more information,
please visit:***

Devin Franklin from Southern Center for Human Rights and Keyanna Jones from Community Movement Builders on [Democracy Now](#)
Kelly Hayes from Truthout's Movement Memos speaks to [Micah Herskind Statement](#) from Fair Fight
[Statement](#) from Atlanta Solidarity Fund
[Statement](#) from Vote To Stop Cop City
[Statement](#) from Southern Center for Human Rights

Resources from Press On for [Making Media About Cop City](#)

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