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## *We Don't Need Trump's Thugs in Chicago*

“Hitler had his Brown shirts and Mussolini had his Black shirts, now Donald Trump has his camouflage shirts.” Thus began a statement signed by 15 distinguished interdenominational religious leaders in Chicago that I joined, including ministers, priests, and rabbis.

Comparisons to Hitler are always explosive, but the comparison is apt. “Hitler’s bullyboys,” the statement continues, “operated on the fringes or outside of the law to violently intimidate Germany’s leftists and finally to exterminate Jews. Trump’s bully boys are operating on the fringes or outside the law to violently intimidate America’s progressives and people of color who are exercising their First Amendment right to protest racial injustice.”

Portland, Oregon, provides the model. Trump dispatched untrained, unidentified, camouflage-wearing, military-uniformed, no name-tagged bullyboys who are literally kidnapping protesters, stuffing them in unidentified vans, taking them to unknown locations without charges — and against the wishes of local law enforcement officers the mayor of Portland and the governor of Oregon.

Trump has announced that he will send similar teams to Chicago, New York, Detroit, Atlanta, Baltimore and other “liberal Democrat-run cities,” to use his phrase. The excuse is to defend federal property. The reality is that this is a cynical re-election ploy. As Portland shows, Trump’s gambit will spark a large, hostile reaction which he hopes to use to scare suburban voters into supporting this law-and-disorder president.

Chicago Mayor Lori Lightfoot has warned Trump not to try this in Chicago. “[N]o troops, no agents that are coming in outside of our knowledge, notification, and control that are violating people’s constitutional rights.” Lightfoot told CNN’s Jake Tapper on Sunday during an appearance on “State of the Union. “We can’t just allow anyone to come into Chicago, play police in our streets, in our neighborhoods, when they don’t know the first thing about our city. That’s a recipe for disaster. And that’s what you’re seeing playing out in Portland on a nightly basis.”

We support her resistance — and the opposition expressed by the Pentagon, members of Congress, former U.S. military officials, historians and constitutional scholars — to Trump’s effrontery.

We don’t need the president’s thugs in Chicago, but we would like real federal assistance. While overall crime has decreased compared to last year, violent crime — particularly murders and shootings — has soared.

Chicago has no gun shop and no gun range. The guns come from outside of Chicago, generally across the border from Indiana. We need common sense regulations on guns to stop the pipeline into Chicago. Trump could help because it is Republicans and the gun lobby that stands in the way.

Real federal assistance wouldn’t be dispatching bullyboys to terrorize citizens exercising their First Amendment rights. It would help with jobs and training for the young. It would help with rent and mortgage forgiveness during the pandemic lockdown when people can’t work. If Trump and Senate Republicans don’t act immediately, literally millions will be on the verge of eviction.

We need real investment in our schools, so the savage inequality with suburban schools can be reduced. We need health care to be a right, not a privilege, and at the very least for the federal government to cover all medical expenses related to COVID-19. In a pandemic, we all have a stake in ensuring that the sick can afford to get the treatment they need.

Our sons and daughters volunteer to serve in the military. When Vladimir Putin puts a bounty on the heads of our soldiers, we need Trump to defend them, not to ignore the attack.

Trump scorns real assistance to cities. He scorns meeting with our elected leaders before announcing that he plans to dispatch his thugs to our city. And he disgraces our democracy with this cynical and dangerous campaign ploy.

Black Lives Matter Chicago and other organizations are going to court to get an injunction to prohibit Trump's agents from "interfering in or otherwise policing lawful and peaceful assemblies and protests" in Chicago.

The religious leaders who issued the statement pledged that if Trump dispatched bullyboys to Chicago without the permission of the mayor, they would be met with a "massive, disciplined, nonviolent ... march of resistance." We will not let the president trample our Constitution, suppress our rights, and terrorize our citizens with impunity.

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