

AG Barr condemns George Floyd killing & Antifa 'extremists' sowing violence, pledges probe into police civil rights violations

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US Attorney General William Barr has denounced the police killing of George Floyd and accused Antifa and other "extremist groups" of engaging in violence under cover of the peaceful protests triggered by Floyd's death.

Barr slammed "*senseless acts of anarchy*" by "*extremist agitators who are hijacking the protests to pursue their own separate and violent agenda*" during a press conference on Thursday, declaring that looting, arson, and attacks on police and federal agents "*are not exercises of First Amendment rights.*"

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They are crimes designed to terrify fellow citizens and intimidate communities.

He called out Antifa while describing three separate groups that law enforcement has observed on the streets during the past two weeks of protests. While affirming that the majority of demonstrators are peaceful, he warned violent extremists were using the peaceful protests over Floyd's death as cover for "*instigating and participating*" in violent activity, noting 51 arrests had been made for federal crimes in connection with the rioting.

Barr also called attention to "*foreign actors playing all sides to exacerbate the violence,*" adding that the Department of Justice was "*working to restore order in the District of Columbia and around the nation.*" All major law enforcement agencies have been deployed to combat the unrest, he said.

Acknowledging that Floyd's death "*exposes concerns that reach far beyond this particular case,*" Barr pledged to work with community leaders to repair the black community's relationship with the justice system. The Department of Justice and FBI are both investigating allegations of racism and federal civil rights violations among police departments, he said, declaring Thursday a "*day of mourning*" for the slain security guard.

"The rule of law will prevail," Barr concluded.

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FBI Director Chris Wray echoed Barr's condemnation of the "*radicals and extremists*" operating among the protesters, insisting law enforcement had no intention of attempting to discourage peaceful rallies. Antifa and other extremists, however, "*have set out to sow discord and upheaval rather than join in the righteous pursuit of equality and justice*," Wray said. "*By driving us apart they're undermining the urgent work and constructive engagement of all those who are trying to bring us together.*"

Protests marred by outbreaks of violence and heavy-handed police crackdowns have raged through the US since last Monday, when black security guard Floyd was killed by a white police officer kneeling on his neck for several minutes. While most gatherings have remained peaceful, outbreaks of intense violence have led to the deaths of several protesters and police officers.
