

An Open Letter to the 112th Congress

FROM THE

American Civil Liberties Union, LatinoJustice PRLDEF and the National Institute for Latino Policy

Our organizations join together to highlight serious concerns about civil and human rights abuses against the citizens of Puerto Rico by their government, including infringement on the rights of free speech, peaceful assembly and freedom from police violence and abuse.

The severity and scope of police abuse are on a level that would not be tolerated in the 50 states.

Under the U.S. Constitution, Puerto Ricans are entitled to the same rights and protections as all U.S. citizens.

Over the last two years, heavily armed riot squads have descended on peaceful student and labor protesters at the University of Puerto Rico and in the streets of San Juan. We have documented beatings of students by police armed with nightsticks, the use of pepper spray on protesters and groping of female students. Communities that have suffered ongoing police brutality, including the use of lethal force, rarely receive justice for the abuses endured.



We urge Members of Congress to speak out about these abuses and make clear that the violent restriction of the constitutionally protected rights of Puerto Ricans will not be tolerated. **The Justice Department investigation into the Puerto Rico Police Department, which was initiated in 2008, must come to a close.** Better police training and monitoring will help ensure that all residents of Puerto Rico are safe from unlawful police violence and remain free to exercise their First Amendment and universal human rights. While the chief of police recently resigned, his departure will not fix the problem of systemic police abuse and brutality that predated his appointment and continued on his watch.

Members of Congress always have and must continue to exercise their rightful role in condemning abuse and injustice whenever and wherever they happen—and cannot ignore violations in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

We ask you to join us for a congressional briefing on **Tuesday, July 12, 10 a.m.** in 2226 Rayburn, to learn more about the ongoing police abuses in Puerto Rico and what you can do to help stop them.

Anthony D. Romero, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union

Juan Cartagena, President & General Counsel, LatinoJustice PRLDEF

Angelo Falcon, President, National Institute for Latino Policy



LATINOJustice
PRLDEF



aclu.org/puertorico