

November 22, 2016

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Loretta Lynch  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Ave  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear President Obama and Attorney General Lynch,

I am writing to you regarding the recent reports about the escalating violence towards demonstrators in and around the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, protesting the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). Hundreds of Americans are exercising their right to assemble by peacefully gathering in solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe to preserve their sacred lands and protect their health and safety. Use of less-lethal tactics, including the use of rubber bullets, water cannons and tear gas threatens the physical safety of the demonstrators and further exacerbates tensions.

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution protects the freedom of speech and freedom to peacefully assemble. The Department of Justice (DOJ) has a responsibility to ensure that American's can exercise these rights in a safe manner. DOJ has previously cautioned that the use of less-lethal weapons should be a last resort and that great restraint of police powers should be used to protect the rights of lawful demonstrators. In order to protect the rights of the lawful and peaceful demonstrators near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, I call on you to send federal observers to safeguard the rights and interests of all parties. Further, I urge you to instruct the National Guard that is currently deployed at the demonstration site to better protect the physical safety of the demonstrators. The Administration should take necessary steps to prevent future confrontations and open the lines of communication between the water protectors and law enforcement.

Thank you for your attention on this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Jared Polis  
Member of Congress

