



The National Voice for Direct-Care RNs

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November 22, 2016

The Honorable Loretta E. Lynch
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Madam Attorney General:

On behalf of National Nurses United (NNU), the largest organization of registered nurses in the United States, we write to you with an urgent request to protect the rights and health of the members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe and fellow water protectors, who, for months, have sought to halt construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), which poses great risk to public health.

As you may know, police and armed guards have attacked members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, other First Nations, environmental activists, and other protectors who have bravely participated in protests against the pipeline project. Reports of police in riot gear using pepper spray, military grade equipment, and other military style tactics, including the use of water cannons, follow physical attacks on protesters by armed security guards who have who have used dogs in ways reminiscent of assaults on peaceful protesters during the Civil Rights movement, as well as arrests of media covering the protests.

NNU's Registered Nurse Response Network (RNRN), a national network of volunteer nurses, earlier this month deployed a second team of RN volunteers to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation—to help with existing medical and first aid support for land and water protectors. These registered nurses have witnessed the violence themselves and are deeply disturbed by both the violence, and the fact that law enforcement officers who should be standing up for the rights of all, are perpetrating that violence.

This is a seminal test for the First Amendment's protection of public protest. Registered nurses call on the Department of Justice to promptly end the militarized response to Standing Rock water protesters, and immediately stop the law enforcement use of military-grade weapons and equipment that comes from the federal government. We urge you to immediately send investigators to the Standing Rock Reservation and the surrounding areas to look into the serious allegations of violence toward peaceful protesters and to

immediately intervene to ensure the safety and protect the rights of all concerned. We further urge you to exercise your oversight powers to ensure that the federal government is respecting all of its treaty obligations with the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe.


We look forward to your prompt response to this troubling situation.

Sincerely,

Deborah Burger, RN, Co-President

Handwritten signature of Deborah Burger in cursive script.

Jean Ross, RN, Co-President

Handwritten signature of Jean Ross in cursive script.