

BPD union accuses DA Rollins of ‘implicitly’ condoning violence against police; Rollins links union to ‘white fragility’

By [Travis Andersen](#) Globe Staff, Updated June 3, 2020, 10:38 p.m.



Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

The largest union for Boston police officers on Tuesday accused Suffolk District Attorney Rachael Rollins of recklessly labeling all cops murderers and “implicitly” condoning violence against them, prompting Rollins to chide the labor group for what she said was its white “fragility.”

The initial salvo from the Boston Police Patrolmen’s Association came in a letter to Rollins dated Tuesday, which followed several days of largely peaceful protests in Boston

Rollins dated Tuesday, which followed several days of largely peaceful protests in Boston and elsewhere over the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis.

Violence and looting erupted Sunday night in downtown Boston, following a day of peaceful demonstrations in the city. Fifty-three people were arrested, and nine police officers were taken to the hospital in the tumult that followed the demonstration, as were 18 bystanders, according to authorities.

In Tuesday's letter, the BPPA criticized Rollins in part for tweets she posted Saturday, before the protests.

The letter attributed Saturday tweets to Rollins that said, "We are being murdered at will by the police" and "No more words. Demand action." The following day, the letter said, police protected thousands of people who "sought to peacefully raise their voices through 'words.'"

Unfortunately, the letter continued, when night fell "some protesters took 'action' - by violently attacking police officers. Still, our officers responded, as they always do, by protecting the City and each other. A job made all the more difficult because of your reckless tweet calling for 'no more words,' which was followed within 24 hours with violence against the police, the likes of which this City has not seen in a generation. While you quickly and cavalierly label all police officers murderers, the fact is that BPD officers responded to violent attacks against them with courage and restraint."

The union posted a copy of the letter on Twitter, writing that it was sent in response to Rollins's "incendiary and Anti-Police remarks."

She fired back on Twitter.

"You mean Anti-Police BRUTALITY," Rollins tweeted Wednesday. "And did I somehow miss BPPA's letter denouncing the murder of George Floyd and calling for the immediate termination and prosecution of the 4 police that murdered him and/or watched and did nothing while he died? White fragility is real people."

And in a follow-up statement Tuesday, Rollins said she states “unequivocally, my discontent is not with the overwhelming majority of police officers who serve our communities with dignity and pride, who are culturally competent and bring honor to the badge they wear. No, my outrage is laser focused on the rogue few who believe that they can kill with impunity. And they have been empowered to do so by Mayors across the country that will not fire them and District Attorney’s across the country that will not prosecute them. That stops now.”

Rollins also said during a briefing Monday that it’s “completely ironic to have to say to you, ‘Please don’t be violent. Please keep your voice down. Please be silent and comply with all of the police’s requirements,’ when in fact, it’s those very people that murder us with impunity.”

The union took issue with those remarks as well in Tuesday’s letter.

“You saw our City on fire Sunday night,” the letter said. “And, we know you saw BPD officers put their lives on the line to keep our City safe. Yet, you accuse us of ‘murder ... with impunity’ - that is disgraceful. All Boston Police Officers wear the badge with pride, and understand the responsibility that comes with their position. We protect and serve the people of Boston, even when under attack. You put our lives and the safety of our great City at risk when you implicitly call for and condone violence. The people of Suffolk County most assuredly deserve better.”

Rollins [condemned](#) the violence that unfolded Sunday night, saying Monday that her staff is working with Boston police to prosecute people who “disgraced George Floyd’s memory by looting, and burning police cars, and throwing objects and debris. And in fact, even shooting at officers, I am told, in a drive-by situation. That is unacceptable. You will be prosecuted and held accountable.”

And on Twitter Tuesday, Rollins highlighted additional remarks from Monday’s briefing, when she offered praise for police telling reporters that “I work with them every single

which she offered praise for police, telling reporters that “I work with them every single day, Boston police detectives, Mass state police troopers; they are exceptional men and women. But we have to stand up when those that aren’t, fail us. Because we are dying in the street.”

On Wednesday, Rollins’ office [pushed](#) to have a Dorchester man accused of 21 counts of attempted murder for shooting near police officers early Monday held without bail for 120 days under the state’s dangerousness law. A Boston Municipal Court judge was expected to rule Wednesday afternoon.

And in her written statement Tuesday, Rollins said violence “against all human beings - those perpetrated against the police and by the police – is unacceptable and will be prosecuted in Suffolk County. We cannot honor George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, David McAtee - all victims of violence – by perpetuating more violence. That does not honor their memory and legacy. But for all of those asking for peace, I ask: what are you doing for justice?”

On Wednesday night, Representative Ayanna Pressley released a statement supporting Rollins and calling for the BPPA to apologize.

“Our District Attorney Rachael Rollins has earned the deep trust of families, advocates, and officers across Suffolk County,” the statement said. “Her command of the law and her precise sense of true justice and accountability are unmatched. The tactics of the Boston Police Patrolmen’s Association are predictable but deeply disappointing. The BPPA’s unfounded attacks put the DA at risk, but will not derail for a moment her tireless and disciplined work to lead us towards a more just and humane legal system that centers the dignity and humanity of the people we have all sworn to serve and protect. The Patrolmen’s Association should immediately issue an apology to our District Attorney.”

“In a time of national crisis, when Black men and women are disproportionately dying in police custody, the BPPA should be at the table humbly working to chart a path forward, not tearing down a Black woman in leadership and putting her life at further risk ” the

not tearing down a Black woman in leadership and putting her life at further risk," the statement added.

Danny McDonald, John R. Ellement, and Amanda Kaufman of the Globe Staff and Globe Correspondent Jeremy C. Fox contributed to this report.

Travis Andersen can be reached at travis.andersen@globe.com. Follow him on Twitter [@TAGlobe](https://twitter.com/TAGlobe).

[Show 119 comments](#)