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Citing “Attempts to Sabotage Free and Fair Elections,” Voting Rights Advocates File Lawsuit Against Private Mercenary Contractor

Council on American-Islamic Relations -- Minnesota and the League of Women Voters of Minnesota sue Atlas Aegis for plans to deploy armed ex-soldiers to polling places across Minnesota.

MINNEAPOLIS (October 20, 2020) -- The Council on American-Islamic Relations of Minnesota (CAIR-MN) and the League of Women Voters of Minnesota filed a federal lawsuit today against a private mercenary contractor, Atlas Aegis, for voter intimidation in Minnesota. The complaint alleges that Atlas Aegis’s plan to hire and deploy armed ex-soldiers to polling sites in the state constitutes illegal voter intimidation under the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The complaint cites an advertisement for armed security on election day in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metro area that appeared on job posting websites on October 6, 2020, as well as interviews with Anthony Caudle, the chairman of Atlas Aegis, in *The Washington Post* [confirming](#) the authenticity of the advertisements and threatening to send ex-special forces soldiers to polling places in Minnesota.

“Today we affirm our stand against this clear plan of voter intimidation and suppression by armed forces targeting communities of color and new Americans,” says Jaylani Hussein, the Executive Director of CAIR-Minnesota. “We stand with our partner, the League of Women Voters of Minnesota, to take all legal steps to ensure that voters do not face intimidation of any kind as they go to the polls in what is perhaps the most important election in American history. Our democracy depends on the right to vote and this right must be maintained and protected.”

“The kind of voter intimidation that this group has planned is exactly what the Voting Rights Act was written to protect against,” says Michelle Witte, Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota. “The ugly reality of racist voter intimidation tactics that civil rights leaders guarded against 55 years ago are alive and well today, and the League of Women Voters of Minnesota will stand against any attempt to threaten those exercising their constitutional right to vote. The League of Women Voters has been fighting voter suppression for 100 years, and we are proud to stand with our partner, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, in confronting this violent, racist menace.”

The complaint alleges that the “Defendants’ objective is to further intimidate people with certain political beliefs from accessing polling locations through the presence of armed and elite, highly trained security personnel. Defendants’ threat is terrifyingly credible given the concrete steps they have already taken to recruit those armed personnel, particularly considering the context of

broader voter intimidation efforts targeting voters and activists in Minnesota and elsewhere in the United States.”

“The threat of sending armed mercenaries to voting stations during the presidential election is not just a brazen attempt to intimidate voters and suppress their vote; it is a grave threat to our democracy,” says Ben Clements, Board Chair and Senior Legal Advisor for Free Speech For People, which is serving as co-lead counsel for the plaintiffs. “The defendants’ targeting of people of color and those fighting for social justice is part of a long reprehensible tradition in this country. And their threats of violence stand among the more extreme forms of voter intimidation that the Voting Rights Act makes illegal and empowers the courts to prevent.”

The plaintiffs are represented by Free Speech For People, a nonpartisan nonprofit legal advocacy organization, Emery Celli Brinckerhoff Abady Ward & Maazel LLP, and Lathrop GPM LLP. They are seeking a court order to stop the defendants’ unlawful conduct and to protect the fundamental right to vote.

See: “Former Special Forces sought by private security company to guard polling sites in Minnesota, company says”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/private-security-minnesota-election/2020/10/09/89766964-0987-11eb-991c-be6ead8c4018_story.html

Read the complaint [here](#).