

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Local Protestors Demand Justice for Natasha McKenna**

*Fairfax, Virginia – July 11, 2016* – Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ) Northern Virginia is delivering a petition to Fairfax County Sheriff Stacey Kincaid on Monday morning, demanding that she fire the six deputies who tortured Natasha McKenna to death. The petition delivery will coincide with a protest outside the Fairfax County Courthouse, demanding justice for McKenna.

Natasha McKenna was taken to the Fairfax Adult Detention Center because of an Alexandria warrant on January 26, 2015, after reporting an assault and being taken to the hospital the previous day. On February 3, McKenna, mentally ill and deteriorating, was removed from her cell while naked, wrestled to the ground by six sheriff's deputies in hazmat suits, strapped to a restraint chair with her face covered in a spit mask, and tasered four times while restrained, creating a medical crisis. She never recovered and died in a hospital on February 8, 2015.

McKenna's last words were "You promised you wouldn't kill me."

"We are appalled that it has taken so long for Sheriff Kincaid to hold these deputies accountable for McKenna's torture and death," said Cayce Utley, a lead organizer with SURJ Northern Virginia. "We are tired of waiting for Kincaid to determine whether black lives matter. If Natasha McKenna's life doesn't matter enough to the sheriff to hold these men accountable, she needs to resign."

Both Fairfax County Police and Commonwealth's Attorney Ray Morrogh have refused to hold the Fairfax County sheriff's deputies accountable for their actions, even resorting to victim-blaming and racist tropes such as asserting that McKenna was "hyper-aggressive, impervious to pain."

Neither the changes proposed by the Fairfax County Ad Hoc Police Practices Review Commission nor the county's Diversion First program would have prevented what happened to McKenna.

"Commonwealth's Attorney Morrogh said he cried when he watched the video of Natasha's torture, but he refused to charge deputies with a crime," said Utley. "Sheriff Kincaid keeps telling us she is making changes with Diversion First, but she has publicly stated that Natasha would not have been a candidate for diversion. If it wouldn't work for Natasha, it doesn't work for us. We're not satisfied with platitudes and PR that cover for racist abuses by law enforcement."

Fairfax County maintains, on the basis of a survey released in April, 2016, that county residents are generally satisfied with local policing. The survey significantly underrepresented Black people, Asians, Latinx, immigrants, people without college degrees, and young people living in Fairfax County.

A petition demanding the firing of sheriff's deputies who tortured Natasha McKenna to death has previously been delivered to Sheriff Kincaid without acknowledgement.

SURJ Northern Virginia is a chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice, a national network of groups and individuals organizing White people for racial justice. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves White people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability. SURJ works to connect people across the country while supporting and collaborating with local and national racial justice organizing efforts. SURJ provides a space to build relationships, skills and political analysis to act for change.

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