

Fear Is Not a Strategy for Safety

President Trump justifies assuming control of the D.C. police and deploying the National Guard by declaring our city is “overrun by violent gangs, blood thirsty criminals, roving mobs of youth, drugged out maniacs, and homeless people.” Such sweeping language is both inaccurate and dehumanizing, increasing the risk of indiscriminate arrests and the use of excessive force.

From the White House, the president sees a lawless wasteland. We beg to differ. We see fellow human beings—neighbors, workers, friends and family—each made in the image of God.

Even one violent crime is one too many, and all Washingtonians deserve to live in safety. But safety cannot be achieved through political theatre and military force. It requires honesty and sustained collaboration between government, civic, and private partners—work now being sidelined. Inflammatory rhetoric distracts from that work, even as the administration has cut more than \$1 billion from programs proven to reduce crime, including law enforcement support, addiction and mental health treatment, youth programs, and affordable housing.

The president has likened his intentions for Washington—and possibly other cities—to the harsh measures already used against migrants, tactics that have resulted in thousands detained in inhumane conditions and many deported without due process.

As religious leaders, we remain firm in our commitment to serve those in need and to work collaboratively toward solutions to our city’s most pressing problems. We call on our political and civic leaders to reject fear-based governance and work together in a spirit of dignity and respect—so that safety, justice, and compassion prevail in our city.

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