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Nearly Two Dozen Leading Civil Rights Groups Condemn Trump Administration Memo Threatening Lawyers and Law Firms That Bring Suits Against the Federal Government

Yesterday, the White House sent a memo to U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi and U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem directing the Department of Justice to pursue sanctions against lawyers and law firms that pursue what the Trump administration deems “unreasonable” or “frivolous” litigation against the federal government.

Today, a group of 22 civil rights organizations, including the Legal Defense Fund, the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights under Law, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Latino Justice, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Women’s Law Center, Asian Americans Advancing Justice – AAJC, Lambda Legal, the National Immigration Law Center, Demos, NAACP, the National Urban League, the National Action Network, the National Coalition for Black Civic Participation, National Council of Negro Women, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Common Cause, the National Partnership for Women and Families, End Citizens United, and UnidosUS vehemently condemn President Trump’s memorandum and call for urgent action to defend the rule of law.

The organizations issued the following statement:

“Yesterday’s memorandum from President Trump to the Attorney General and the Secretary of Homeland Security regarding legal actions against the federal government is the latest in a rash of statements and actions intended to chill dissent, avoid accountability, and weaponize the government to attack opponents of this administration and its lawless actions. Issued a week after Mr. Trump gave an unprecedented and politically-charged speech at the Department of Justice, the memorandum compromises the agency’s independence by calling for investigations of, and threatening sanctions against, lawyers and law firms who bring ‘frivolous claims’ against the federal government. It also mentions one attorney by name.

“Taken together, this memorandum – coupled with the recently-issued executive orders targeting specific law firms and individual lawyers who have brought legal challenges against President Trump and his former or current administration and ongoing attacks on the judiciary – is a dangerous tactic seeking to prevent the legal system from operating as an independent check on government authority. These actions place the continuing viability of our democracy at risk and should alarm the public. We call on the judiciary, bar associations, law firms, and individual lawyers to speak out against this dangerous assault on the legal profession and the rule of law, hold firm in defending and facilitating the lawful and ethical practice of law, and stand ready to scrutinize and hold the government accountable for its own unethical and unlawful conduct in pursuit of this administration’s aims.”

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