

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
June 13, 1967

STATEMENT BY H. RAP BROWN, SNCC CHAIRMAN, ON PRATTVILLE, ALABAMA SITUATION

Gentlemen: I have called this conference to clarify the position of SNCC on the developments in Prattville, Alabama, Autauga County. The facts of the case, which either have not been widely reported or distorted, are as follows:

On Sunday, June 11, Stokely Carmichael, former SNCC Chairman, was arrested by Kenny Hill on a charge of disorderly conduct, after Mr. Carmichael had called out the slogan "Black Power" to some friends gathered at a meeting. The police, who had been patrolling the area, were apparently trying to stalk Mr. Carmichael with the hope of arresting him and provoking a disturbance. A crowd of friends and co-workers gathered and exchanged words with the police in their efforts to determine the charges being levied against Mr. Carmichael. Police attacked one news reporter and damaged the equipment of Norman Lumpkin from Radio Station WRMA in Montgomery. Shortly thereafter, white klansmen riding down the main street began shooting from their cars; when black men returned the fire, the shooting stopped. Later on that evening, crowds of klansmen, accompanied by the police, entered houses in the black community, interrogating the occupants, beating and sending home those persons who were not in their own houses, and forcibly sending persons who did not live in Prattville to the highways. A mob of several whites, including klansmen and police, surrounded the residence of Mr. Dan Hauser, NAACP leader in Prattville, trapping some 25 black people, mostly women and children, inside. When the people refused to come out, the crowd began shooting into the house and shot out all street lights in the area amidst shots and screams. Finding themselves in a critical situation and their lives in danger, a few black men began returning fire, which is believed to have resulted in the wounding of five policemen.

Eventually the mob entered the house, ordered the occupants outside and held several persons for almost an hour in front of the house with arms raised. After people were questioned through the use of beatings and physical intimidation, the following nine persons were arrested: Stanley Wise, Uzee Nunnery, Theophilus Smith, Julius Roberts, Rev. James Harris, Haber Willis, Charlie Devine, Nathaniel Rudolph, and Horace Morris.

The black community of Prattville was concerned for the safety of the arrested men because Charles Rasberry, a black man, was murdered in the same Prattville Jail in February by the same policemen who arrested Carmichael. We in SNCC became further concerned when we received inquiries from members of the press investigating a report that Carmichael had been killed. Our concern was heightened by the fact that



all of the jailed men have been kept incommunicado by Prattville authorities, and we were unable to get any reliable news of their physical condition or treatment. Mr. Hauser was severely beaten by police, chased out of town, is now in the St. Jude Hospital in Montgomery, and is in danger of losing sight in one of his eyes. Mr. John Hulett of the Lowndes County Freedom Organization was beaten and chased out of town. We know that this entire incident was the result of deliberate and provocative violence on the part of the Prattville police, along with their brothers in the Ku Klux Klan. If this present breakdown of law and police lawlessness continues, the black community will be forced to take defensive measures and retaliate. Total violence will be the result. For that reason, we have called upon the Attorney General of the United States to act immediately. Mr. Ramsay Clarke was sent the following telegram:

We direct your attention to the lawless and criminal invasion of the Negro community by Prattville, Alabama police and klansmen. We charge that civil and legal rights of several Negroes were violated. We can document several instances. Ten Negroes being held incommunicado in Prattville jail, where in recent months at least one Negro has been murdered by police. We urge that you investigate conduct of police, act immediately to protect rights of Negro population and to prosecute police officers guilty of violence against innocent people in their homes. Failure of federal government to act to ensure justice will encourage violence by white racists, and leave Negro community no alternative but self defense. Responsibility for peace in months to come rests with your Department. Request that you inform us of action you take. Documented letter to follow.

H. Rap Brown  
Chairman, SNCC

We have also called upon the major civil rights organizations to unite in the defense of the black community in Prattville. The text of the telegram sent to these organizations is available.

We profoundly hope that a complete and impartial investigation of these incidents will be made by the Justice Department, and that appropriate charges will be brought against the klansmen and police responsible for the violence. We demand that Atty. General Clarke take this action. Unless this is done, the black community of Prattville, as well as blacks throughout the South, will know that their rights will not be protected by the legal structures of this country and will move to protect their rights by any means necessary.

The responsibility for what happens this summer in the South rests, in large measure, upon whatever positive action the Federal Government takes in this situation.

Lyndon Baines Johnson has a bill before Congress concerning "Crime in the Streets" which is directed against America's black communities. We in SNCC would strongly suggest that L.B.J. should be personally concerned with directing his attention to the lawless whites of Autauga County--since his wife, Lady Bird, owns one of the