

March 8, 2024

The South Asian Legal Defense Fund's Statement Regarding:

Washington's King County's District Attorney's Office Declined to File Criminal Charges Against Seattle Police Department Officer Kevin Dave Following the Killing of Jaahnavi Kandula

The decision by the King County Prosecutor's Office not to press criminal charges against the officer who killed Jaahnavi Kandula is deeply troubling and reflects a broader pattern of impunity that undermines trust in law enforcement. Police officers must be held accountable for their actions, especially when those actions result in the loss of life. Without accountability, there can be no justice for victims like Jaahnavi Kandula and their families. The failure to prosecute officers sends a message that police are above the law, further eroding public trust and confidence in the justice system.

District attorney offices play a crucial role in ensuring police accountability, yet they often fail to fulfill this responsibility. Too often, prosecutors are reluctant to bring charges against law enforcement officers, citing deference to police or concerns about undermining public safety. However, by failing to hold officers accountable, prosecutors perpetuate a culture of impunity and injustice. To address these systemic issues, communities must advocate for greater police accountability and oversight. This includes demanding transparency in police investigations, supporting civilian review boards with subpoena power, and holding elected officials accountable for their commitment to police reform.

We wish to amplify the Statement of the ACLU-WA's Enoka Herat, the Policing and Immigration Policy Program Director at the ACLU of Washington:

The decision by the King County Prosecutor's Office regarding the officer who killed Jaahnavi Kandula does not result in the accountability that Ms. Kandula's family and the community deserves. While true justice would mean Jaahnavi never being killed in the first place, this case highlights the ongoing need for real transformation of policing culture and practices at the Seattle Police Department (SPD). Through the actions and words of its officers, SPD has failed the community and increased distrust rather than public safety. The city must hold the department accountable when it causes harm and work toward a place where all Seattle residents feel safe. Our thoughts are with Jaahnavi's family.

We wish to encourage South Asians to become civically in their communities and cities to ensure oversight and raise standards for law enforcement. By actively engaging with our communities and advocating for change, we can lend our insight and experiences as members of this country's racial makeup and multicultural fabric to help create a more just and accountable society for all. Rest in Power Jaahnavi Kandula.

Sincerely,

The South Asian Legal Defense Fund