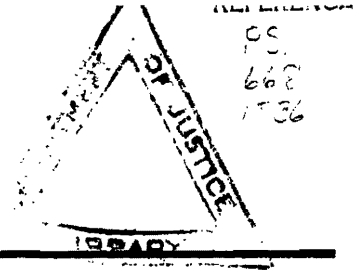




Department of Justice



STATEMENT BY

ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT F. KENNEDY

May 3, 1963

We have been in contact with Negro and White leaders of Birmingham throughout the day.

Both the Negro and White communities of Birmingham know that very real and deep injustices have been inflicted on Negro citizens of that city for a long period of time. These demonstrations are the understandable expressions of resentment and hurt by people who have been the victims of abuse and deprivation of their most basic rights for many years. I believe that everyone understands that their just grievances must be resolved. Continued refusal to grant equal rights and opportunities to Negroes makes increasing turmoil inevitable.

However, the timing of the present demonstrations is open to question.

A new city government has recently been elected, and its right to office is now before the courts. The elected mayor, Mr. Boutwell, already has made clear his intention to resolve the difficulties facing the community.

School children participating in street demonstrations is a dangerous business. An injured, maimed or dead child is a price that none of us can afford to pay.

The grievances of the Negro residents of Birmingham or of any city, North or South, should be aired and the injustices to them should be removed. But I hope for the sake of everyone that this can be done in meetings, in good faith negotiations, and not in the streets.

At this moment, primary responsibility for peaceful solutions rests with the leaders of business, labor and the bar, as well as the city officials themselves.