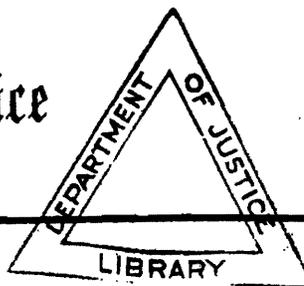




# Department of Justice



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STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE ROBERT F. KENNEDY  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES  
ISSUED AT 11:00 A.M., MAY 24, 1961

We have been in frequent contact with responsible state and local officials of Alabama and Mississippi. The evidence at this time is that these officials fully intend to see that law and order is maintained and that any new outbreaks of mob violence will be controlled by local law enforcement officers. The leaders of the student groups testing segregation laws in Alabama and Mississippi today were informed that no Federal Marshals would accompany the buses.

The Federal Government's responsibility is quite clear in this situation. Our obligation is to protect interstate travelers and maintain law and order only when local authorities are unable or unwilling to do so.

There is no basis at this time to assume that the people of Mississippi will be lawless or that the responsible state and local officials in Mississippi will not maintain law and order and protect interstate travel.

We have no power to prevent groups or individuals from traveling in the South, the North, the East or the West.

However, we have appealed to all persons in Alabama and elsewhere to use restraint and to weigh their actions carefully -- and the need to do so is even more apparent in the context of the inflammatory situation which exists today.

I think we should all keep in mind that the President is about to embark on a mission of great importance. Whatever we do in the United States at this time, which brings or causes discredit on our Country, can be harmful to his mission.