Statement of Attorney General Loretta E. Lynch
Before the House Judiciary Committee
Tuesday, July 12, 2016
Washington, D.C.

Good morning, Chairman [Bob] Goodlatte, Ranking Member [John] Conyers, and distinguished members of the Committee. I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today to share some of the recent accomplishments of the United States Department of Justice; to outline my priorities for the months ahead; and to discuss how we can continue working together to ensure the security of our nation, the strength of our communities, and the safety of our people.

Of course, as we gather here this morning, that sense of safety has been shaken by the series of devastating events that rocked our nation last week: the tragic deaths of Alton Sterling in Louisiana and Philando Castile in Minnesota, and the deplorable murder of five brave Dallas police officers – Lorne Ahrens, Michael Krol, Michael Smith, Brent Thompson, and Patrick Zamarripa, who were protecting a peaceful protest, along with several of their comrades who were wounded. The Department of Justice – including the FBI, ATF, U.S. Marshals Service, and our U.S. Attorney's Office in the Northern District of Texas – is working closely with our state and local counterparts, and we will offer any assistance we can as the investigation in Dallas unfolds. Among other resources, we will send assistance to the victims and their families. Our hearts are broken for the families and loved ones of those we lost in these tragic events. And our gratitude goes out to the brave men and women who wear the badge, and who risk their lives every day to keep us safe.

As we grapple with the aftermath of these events, the Department of Justice will continue to do everything in our power to build bonds of trust and cooperation between law enforcement and the communities we serve. That work has never been more difficult – or more important. We will continue to offer our state and local partners funding, training, and technical assistance for critical programs and assets like body-worn cameras, de-escalation training, and education in implicit bias. In fact, in the last month, we announced that we would begin providing implicit bias training to the more than 23,000 agents serving our four law enforcement agencies and approximately 5,800 attorneys across our 94 U.S. Attorney's Offices—training that will be expanded later to all criminal prosecutors in the Department's litigating components. Through our National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, we will continue working to enhance procedural justice, reduce bias, and support racial reconciliation. We will continue to promote the recommendations of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing through training and technical assistance. Our Civil Rights Division plays a critical role in ensuring constitutional policing and accountability, and rebuilding trust where trust has eroded. And through our Office of Justice Programs and our Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, we will continue to give local departments the tools they need and the training they require to come home safely – from funds for bulletproof vests to training in officer health, safety, and wellness.

At the same time that we're working to support police and citizens in their efforts to build stronger and more united communities, we remain committed to keeping those communities safe and secure. Just a month ago today, 49 innocent Americans were killed in an attack on the Pulse

nightclub in Orlando – an appalling act of terror and hate that underscored the urgency of confronting threats to our nation wherever they emerge and whatever form they take. There is no responsibility that this department takes more seriously. We are moving aggressively against those who seek to receive training from, or are inspired by, foreign violent extremist groups, and we have arrested more than 90 individuals since 2013 for conduct related to foreign fighter activity and homegrown violent extremism. We are vigilantly monitoring domestic terrorist groups – an undertaking that has been strengthened by the reconstitution of the Attorney General's Domestic Terrorism Executive Committee. We are pursuing a number of efforts to counter threats in cyberspace as well, including the formation of closer partnerships with the private sector and the creation of a specialized cybersecurity unit in our Criminal Division. And we are working closely with our counterparts abroad to pursue terrorists and investigate attacks around the world. As the recent incidents in Turkey, Bangladesh, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia have reminded us, terror knows no borders, and in the face of violent extremism, we must stand with our global partners in unity, readiness, and resolve.

Of course, in order to effectively tackle the most serious threats, we must ensure that our resources are being deployed as wisely and as efficiently as possible, which is why we are so deeply committed to making our criminal justice system more effective and more fair – a commitment that I know this Committee shares. Since my predecessor, Attorney General Eric Holder, launched the Smart on Crime Initiative, the department has been able to devote more time and resources to the most serious cases and the most dangerous defendants. We have also expanded our support for the more than 600,000 Americans who return home each year after serving time in federal and state prisons. One of the surest ways to reduce crime and promote prosperity is to ensure that these individuals have the help they need to successfully return to society, and at the end of April, we held the first-ever National Reentry Week to draw attention to this critical issue and to shine a light on the many ways that the Obama Administration and its partners are working to make that help available. These are promising steps, but we still have a long way to go in order to make our criminal justice system as effective and equitable as possible. In part as a result of overly harsh sentencing practices, prison spending continues to crowd out other critical public safety investments, leading prosecutors, law enforcement, and policymakers of all stripes to embrace sentencing reform – reform that the Department of Justice urges this Congress to enact.

Beyond criminal justice reform, the Justice Department is working to ensure that the most vulnerable among us can experience the full blessings of American life – that their rights are protected; that their freedom is defended; and that their dignity is upheld. This has been one of my primary objectives since my first day as Attorney General. We are standing firmly against the scourge of human trafficking by prosecuting offenders and assisting survivors. We are using the latest evidence-based strategies to help young people who have been exposed to violence. We are working with our American Indian and Alaska Native partners to protect their right to vote and to improve public safety on tribal lands. And we are prosecuting those who seek to harm individuals because of what they look like, where they are from, how they worship, or whom they love.

These are just a few of the efforts that the dedicated men and women of the Department of Justice are advancing every day, and I appreciate the opportunity to discuss them with you. I

want to thank you for your ongoing support of the Justice Department, and I look forward to continuing our work together to build a stronger, safer, and more just nation in the months ahead.

At this time, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.