

# Court again delays racketeering trial against activist accused in violent 'Stop Cop City' protest

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ATLANTA (AP) — A judge in Georgia has again delayed the racketeering trial of a defendant indicted last summer in connection with protests against a planned Atlanta-area police and firefighter training facility.

Opening arguments had been expected Wednesday in the case against Ayla King, 19, of Massachusetts. King, who uses the pronouns they and them, is one of [61 people indicted](#) under Georgia's Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations law, known as RICO. King is the first defendant to stand trial.

State prosecutors have characterized those behind the "Stop Cop City" movement as a group of "militant anarchists" who have committed numerous violence and vandalism against authorities and contractors linked to the project.

King faces a single charge of violating the RICO law, which carries a sentence of five to 20 years in prison although time behind bars is not guaranteed.

Prosecutors accuse the protesters of aiding and abetting arson and domestic terrorism. Authorities said King and 150 to 200 other masked demonstrators [stormed the DeKalb County construction site](#) last March, with some torching construction equipment and others throwing projectiles at retreating officers.

Activists have [questioned authorities' evidence](#) because protesters were arrested at a music festival about three-quarters of a mile (1.2 kilometers) from the construction site and more than an hour after the demonstration. King's attorney has said the teenager is "innocent of all charges."

Wednesday's trial was delayed because the defense argued that King's right to a speedy trial has been violated. Fulton County Superior Court Judge Kimberly Esmond Adams seated a jury Dec. 12, but postponed the trial by nearly a month due to the holidays, which she said would likely cause complications for many of the jurors.

Defense attorney Suri Chadha Jimenez objected to the delay and later filed a motion to dismiss the case, arguing that swearing in a jury wasn't enough to meet the criteria of a speedy trial.

The judge rejected that argument but further delayed the trial because Jimenez said he plans to appeal. It is unclear how long that will take.

Georgia law says any defendant who demands a speedy trial has a right for it to begin within the court term when the demand is filed or in the next one, which ended last week. Trials for the other protesters charged are not expected before this summer, at the earliest.

Demonstrators and civil rights organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union, have condemned indicting the demonstrators and accused state Attorney General Chris Carr, a Republican, of

levying heavy-handed charges to try to silence a movement that has galvanized environmentalists and anti-police protesters across the country.

Atlanta Mayor Andre Dickens and other supporters say the 85-acre, \$90 million police and fire training center would replace inadequate training facilities, and would help address difficulties in hiring and retaining police officers. Opponents have expressed concern that that it could lead to greater police militarization and that its construction in the South River Forest will worsen environmental damage in a poor, majority-Black area.