



The Trial of Ayla King

And the Other Stop Cop City RICO Cases

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On July 7, 2025, Ayla King was scheduled to become the first of the **Stop Cop City** defendants charged with violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act to go to trial. This text has been updated to reflect the fact that at the court date, the judge declared a mistrial and sent Ayla back into the appeals process.

Ayla King and the other defendants in this case were chosen practically **at random** so that the state could attempt to intimidate the entire movement against the proposed police militarization facility in Atlanta, Georgia known as Cop City:

Among the accused are 41 people previously charged with “domestic terrorism” for allegedly participating in the movement to Stop Cop City on the basis of attending a protest or entering a forest; three more people charged with felonies for allegedly distributing flyers; and another three people charged in May 2023 with “money laundering” and “charity fraud” for organizing legal support for activists. Others were previously charged with trespassing misdemeanors, and some were never charged with anything before being indicted under RICO. None of these previous charges has resulted in a single conviction. In fact, none of them have even been indicted.

The prosecution is terrorizing these defendants in order to enable police departments to preserve their stranglehold on public funds. This is a classic example of judicial persecution.

The RICO cases will be tried in groups of five, which means that twelve more trials are scheduled in addition to the trial of Ayla King. The outcome of these cases will contribute to shaping the prospects for protest of all kinds in the second Trump era.

Wherever you are, you can act in solidarity with Ayla King and the other 60 RICO defendants. Drop a banner; put up posters; host a fundraiser. Circulate information about the RICO case.

You can donate to Ayla’s trial fund [**here**](#) and to the Stop Cop City RICO defendants as a whole [**here**](#).

For more background on the Stop Cop City RICO cases, start [**here**](#). For updates, follow [**Fire Ant Movement Defense**](#).

You could also call the office of Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr at (404) 458-3600 and let them know what you think about their behavior.



Update (July 7, 2025)

*Adapted from **Fire Ant Movement Defense** and **other reports**.*

Judge Kevin Farmer declared a mistrial in Ayla King's RICO case today, as some 80 supporters gathered in the courtroom and rallied outside. The mistrial comes in the wake of two years of delays to Ayla's case being heard. When charged with RICO in 2023 after being arrested at a Stop Cop City music festival, Ayla was quick to demand a speedy trial and in 2023 a jury was selected under the judge previously presiding over the case, Judge Adams. The jury never even heard opening arguments, as the case was sent to appeals. The court of appeals refused to dismiss King's charges, but determined that the court proceedings must be public to media (as Judge Adams had refused to allow news media and livestreaming of the court while King's initial jury was selected).

Due to these procedural issues, Judge Farmer ruled the case a mistrial. In ostensibly protecting one "right," the right to public court proceedings, Fulton County continues to completely disregard King's right to a speedy trial. Those familiar with Fulton County, where criminal charges typically take several years to resolve, will find no surprise here. Following the continued, persistent violation of Ayla's rights, Ayla's

lawyer is appealing the mistrial. This leaves Ayla's case in limbo. Currently, it is expected that, paradoxically, King's "speedy trial" will be delayed to September or October, while the trials for other defendants in the RICO case may begin this summer.

Ayla's case exemplifies the miscarriage of justice in this politically-motivated prosecution. Cases like these are "process as punishment," in which the stress and resource drain of facing trial for trumped-up charges are intended to diminish activists' ability to organize. The RICO case itself seeks to frame basic political activity, such as distributing food or attending a protest, as racketeering and political conspiracy.

Despite these intimidation tactics, a vibrant display of support was visible outside the courthouse. Supporters held a punk show, with dancing, free burritos, and coffee, banners and outreach to passersby. Music and continuous cheers drew people to join the rally and learn about the case. Despite the criminalization of political activity, activists in the Stop Cop City movement have continued to organize undeterred to support all the defendants facing charges.

The Background

In 2023, in Atlanta, Georgia, during the movement to stop Cop City, police randomly arrested a teenager named Ayla King for attending a music festival in Weelaunee Forest alongside several hundred other people. The police were lashing out in response to an act of sabotage that had taken place nearly a mile away at the same time as the festival. Like the other 22 people they randomly arrested at the music festival, the police charged Ayla with domestic terrorism.

According to eyewitness reports, the police detained more people, but they focused on arresting the ones who did not provide home addresses in Atlanta. They presumably did so in order to cherry-pick evidence bearing out the narrative about "outside agitators" that racist police and politicians in the South have employed at least since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. described this strategy in his "**Letter from Birmingham Jail.**"

As **reported** at the time,

The 23 people arrested during the music festival are all being charged with Domestic Terrorism under Georgia's HB 452. None of them are accused of throwing stones at riot police. None of them are accused of shooting fireworks at armored vehicles. None of them are accused of using Molotov cocktails to protect protesters, nor of setting Earth-destroying equipment on fire. Instead, they are accused of wearing black clothing, of having traces of mud on their shoes, of wearing camouflage, of running from officers, of being out of breath, of having wet clothing, of possessing a mask. The warrants for all 23 are identical, listing the same general actions for all of them, without reference to specific evidence or witnesses.

A few months later, along with 60 others, Ayla was **additionally charged** with violating the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) Act.

At 19 years of age, Ayla bravely filed for speedy trial. Yet it has taken more than two years for the case to come to trial, presumably because the prosecutors have so little to work with.



In **the indictment** of the Stop Cop City RICO defendants, the prosecution arbitrarily dates the fabricated conspiracy to the day in 2020 that a group of police officers in Minneapolis murdered George Floyd:

The said accused, individually and as persons concerned in the commission of a crime, and together with unindicted co-conspirators, in the State of Georgia and the County of Fulton, on or between May 25, 2020 and August 25, 2023, while associated with an enterprise, did unlawfully conspire and endeavor to conduct and participate in, directly and indirectly, such enterprise through a pattern of racketeering activity.

It is telling that they claim that the conspiracy began before the construction of Cop

City was even being discussed.

For the state, this trial is not about the guilt or innocence of Ayla King; it is about crushing the memory and the spirit of the George Floyd Rebellion. It doesn't matter to **Chris Carr**, the Georgia attorney general who hopes to be elected governor in 2026, that Ayla King was a 16-year-old in Massachusetts when the third precinct **burned** in Minneapolis. In accusing Ayla and 60 people Ayla had never met of beginning a criminal conspiracy together on the day that police murdered George Floyd, Carr and his cronies show that the premise for this trial is chiefly constructed from their paranoid fantasies.

Carr wants to be able to suspend freedom of assembly and freedom of association at will. He is trying to establish a precedent that any person who attends a protest can be held legally responsible not just for any crimes committed that day, but for any crimes committed under similar banners or slogans years before or after. If he succeeds, there will no longer be even a pretense of due process for those accused of participating in social movements: the criminal justice system will be at the disposal of any authoritarian who wishes to crush dissent, no matter how flimsy the pretext.



A punk show that took place the morning of Ayla King's first day of trial.

This is not a new strategy. For years, prosecutors have been trying—and mostly failing—to do more or less the same thing.

In 2017, prosecutors **charged hundreds of people** mass-arrested at Donald Trump's presidential inauguration with eight identical felonies—two of which were not even on the books as legitimate charges—for being in the vicinity of a demonstration. After the defendants in the first two trial blocs were declared innocent on all counts, a judge threw out the remaining charges on account of prosecutorial misconduct. Although the prosecutors failed to obtain a single guilty verdict, they succeeded in tying up the defendants in years of bureaucracy and stress.

The vast majority of the 900+ protesters arrested in Atlanta during the summer of

2020 were simply grabbed at random and charged as if they were personally responsible for the actions of entire crowds. These exaggerated charges enabled the state to extract plea deals from some defendants and to inflict a certain amount of pre-trial punishment, but most of them failed to stick. Now, nearly five long years into the period of reaction following the 2020 uprising, the state is at it again, this time with a twist.



Like the J20 case from 2017, the Stop Cop City RICO case represents an attempt to set a new precedent for guilt by association.

In order to succeed where they've failed in the past, state prosecutors are hoping that the shock value of the words "domestic terrorism" and "outside agitator" will combine with the confusing technicalities of Georgia RICO law to dazzle judge and jury alike. Yet it is inconvenient for Chris Carr, and for his deputy AG John Fowler and his assistant Hallie Dixon who are tasked with arguing the case in court, that Ayla King chose to demand a speedy trial.

It is not going to be easy to convince a jury that Ayla King deserves to spend 20 years in prison simply for attending a music festival in a DeKalb County park to express opposition to the construction of Cop City and listen to famous artists like Zack Fox,

Raury, and Faye Webster, who stayed on the mic and kept the show going to calm the crowd after police attacked the festival.

To put it bluntly, Fowler doesn't have shit on Ayla. And it's not just Ayla—the problem for the prosecution is that Ayla's case is not exceptional, but emblematic. The entire RICO case is a house of cards, full of defendants who were grabbed randomly at a public protest, people who were already in handcuffs in the back of a cop car when the crime they are accused of occurred, people who had the misfortune of being in a public park when the police decided to carry out one of their multi-agency militarized raids.

When you don't have shit, you bullshit. So despite the fact that Ayla was only ever in Atlanta for one weekend in March 2023, Fowler has provided a witness list 21 pages long, mostly comprised of cops and corporate backers of Cop City. His plan, presumably, is to put the entire movement against Cop City on trial, painstakingly describing every instance of lawbreaking, property destruction, and self-defense against police officers over a multi-year period involving thousands of people. Burned bulldozers, smashed windows, masked forest defenders fending off armed police with rocks and fireworks, the spectacular police helicopter footage of two hundred people storming the Cop City construction site—Fowler will show these things to the jury, and then he will try to lay them all at the feet of Ayla King, a teenager in Massachusetts.

The stakes are high. Every person in the bureaucratic institutions that are trying to put Ayla in prison must know that they won't be able to do it without publicity or consequence.

The office of the Georgia Attorney General does not process nearly as large a caseload as the county courts. They are not especially well-equipped to prosecute a big, complex case like this. As a public office, they are required to answer the phone and to open and read all incoming mail. Despite being a public official, Fowler hates publicity. He has repeatedly complained to the court about an instance when a journalist took photos of him while he was accompanying defendants and their lawyers on a tour of the Cop City site, falsely describing the incident as “doxxing” even though he was engaged in his official duties as a representative of the state. When Fowler's incompetence is exposed, he tends to throw his subordinates under the bus—for example, making assistant Attorney General Hallie Dixon face the judge to apologize for violating attorney-client privilege through illegal searches.

Of course, it's not just Chris Carr and his lackey Fowler behind this political prosecution. They're doing the dirty work for the Atlanta Police Foundation and the whole corrupt apparatus of city and county politicians who have a shared interest in quelling all dissent and civil unrest. All those who care about freedom should concern themselves with the outcome of Ayla's trial. You can do this from afar by publicizing the proceedings, ordering pizza or otherwise supporting the rallies outside court, or doing research into the ones who are pressing these absurd charges and what their vulnerabilities might be.



Further Information and Opportunities to Act

- You can donate to the Atlanta Solidarity Fund [here](#).
- You can find a list of all the fundraisers for individual Stop Cop City defendants [here](#).
- You can read about another Stop Cop City defendant, John "Jack" Mazurek, [here](#) and donate to his support fund [here](#).
- You can read about the court hearing that took place on May 14, 2025 [here](#) and [here](#).
- Media coverage is aggregated [here](#).

- To learn more about the J20 cases and the legal support strategy that resulted in a total victory over the mendacious and unprincipled prosecutors, start [here](#).

More Background on the Movement to Stop Cop City

- **"The City in the Forest"** chronicles the first year of the movement.
- **"The Forest in the City"** chronicles the second year of the movement.
- **"Beneath the Concrete, the Forest"** collects first-person accounts from the occupation of Weelaunee forest through the first half of 2022.
- **"Balance Sheet"** explores and evaluates the strategies that different currents in the movement have employed.
- **"Living in an Earthquake"** chronicles February through June of 2023, including the fifth week of action, the repression that followed, and the City Hall mobilizations.
- **"Don't Stop: Continuing the Fight against Cop City"** chronicles the movement's fortunes through the second half of 2023, including the Block Cop City mobilization.
- **"Cop City Is Everywhere: Learning from the Movement to Defend the Forest"** follows the final phase of the movement to date, concluding in 2025.

