

350 Fifth Avenue, 34<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10118-3299  
Tel: 212-290-4700  
Fax: 212-736-1300; 917-591-3452

#### US PROGRAM

Julian Brookes, *Media Officer*  
Sara Darehshori, *Senior Counsel*  
Jamie Fellner, *Senior Advisor*  
Antonio Ginatta, *Advocacy Director*  
Natalie Kato, *Southern State Policy Advocate*  
Clara Long, *Researcher*  
Maria McFarland, *Co-Director*  
Grace Meng, *Researcher*  
Alba Morales, *Researcher*  
Alison Parker, *Co-Director*  
Laura Pitter, *Counterterrorism Advisor*  
Samantha Reiser, *Coordinator*  
Brian Root, *Quantitative Analyst*  
Paul Smith, *Associate*

#### HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH

Kenneth Roth, *Executive Director*  
Michele Alexander, *Deputy Executive Director, Development and Global Initiatives*  
Carroll Bogert, *Deputy Executive Director, External Relations*  
Iain Levine, *Deputy Executive Director, Program*  
Chuck Lustig, *Deputy Executive Director, Operations*

Dinah PoKempner, *General Counsel*  
James Ross, *Legal & Policy Director*  
Hassan Elmasry, *Co-Chair*  
Joel Motley, *Co-Chair*

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hassan Elmasry, *Co-Chair*  
Joel Motley, *Co-Chair*  
Wendy Keys, *Vice-Chair*  
Susan Manilow, *Vice-Chair*  
Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber, *Vice-Chair*  
Sid Sheinberg, *Vice-Chair*  
John J. Studzinski, *Vice-Chair*  
Michael G. Fisch, *Treasurer*  
Bruce Rabb, *Secretary*  
Karen Ackman  
Jorge Castañeda  
Tony Elliott  
Michael E. Gellert  
Hina Jilani  
Betsy Karel  
Robert Kissane  
Kimberly Marteau Emerson  
Oki Matsumoto  
Barry Meyer  
Aoife O'Brien  
Joan R. Platt  
Amy Rao  
Neil Rimer  
Victoria Riskin  
Graham Robeson  
Shelley Rubin  
Kevin P. Ryan  
Ambassador Robin Sanders  
Javier Solana  
Siri Stolt-Nielsen  
Darian W. Swig  
John R. Taylor  
Amy Towers  
Marie Warburg  
Catherine Zennström

October 27, 2014

The Honorable Jay Nixon  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 720  
Jefferson City, MO 65102

RE: Ferguson Commission Recommendations

Via USPS and Facsimile to (573) 751-1495

Dear Governor Nixon:

I write to follow up on my September 9, 2014 letter to you on behalf of Human Rights Watch, in which we urged that the state of Missouri undertake a comprehensive review of law enforcement responses to the protests that began on August 9 in Ferguson. Your recent announcement of the creation of the Ferguson Commission, a panel charged with studying the “the social and economic conditions underscored by the unrest in the wake of the death of Michael Brown,” left unclear whether the panel will address the many outstanding and serious questions about the police response to the protests. We call upon you to ensure a thorough investigation of the response to the protests, either by explicitly charging the panel with conducting such an investigation, or by establishing a separate body with appropriate expertise to do so.

In our letter we shared substantial information we had collected in Ferguson that pointed to serious problems in the police response to the protest. These included apparent violations of the rights to peaceful assembly and freedom of expression, incidents of possible excessive use of force, as well as actions that raised concerns over accountability and transparency of law enforcement. We also documented a general culture of mistrust and frustration with law enforcement that predated the shooting of Michael Brown; multiple residents we interviewed described years of police harassment and intimidation in Ferguson.

To fully address the social and economic conditions in the St. Louis area underscored by the Ferguson protests, and to build a new environment of trust in the community, it is critical that the state tackle both the longstanding concerns over law enforcement’s

HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
WATCH

HRW.org

behavior as well as its response to the protests, including the apparent lack of accountability for abusive law enforcement behavior.

Without a thorough investigation into police actions in the community both before and after the Michael Brown shooting, any recommendations the commission makes will be incomplete. Accordingly, we urge you to specifically charge the Ferguson Commission with reviewing the police response to the Ferguson protests in addition to the police's treatment of the community generally, or to appoint a separate body to undertake this necessary work.

My colleague Natalie Kato will be in contact with your office to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



Maria McFarland Sanchez-Moreno  
Co-Director, US Program  
Human Rights Watch