

The police are attacking protestors again. And this past Wednesday, things went to another level. [Law enforcement officers in Georgia may have just executed environmental activist Manuel Esteban Paez Terán in cold blood.](#) Terán opposed “Cop City,” a planned \$90 million police and fire department training facility being constructed in an Atlanta-area forest previously designated to be used as carbon-buffering parkland. He was killed by a raiding party consisting of dozens of officers from a host of agencies.



Rest in power, Manuel Esteban Paez Terán.

Photograph: Gabe Eisen from the *Guardian*

The police say that Terán shot first but have neither body cam footage nor other evidence to support their claim. And while one state trooper has been hospitalized, witnesses in the area describe hearing a single series of shots and speculate that the officer may have been a victim of friendly fire. The group that killed Terán, according to the *Guardian*, “included … officers from Atlanta police, Dekalb county police, Georgia state patrol, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and the FBI.”

Terán’s mother, Belkis, who lives in Panama, found out about her son’s death through a text message the following day. Now, she’s trying to obtain a tourist visa so she can “clear his name.” And that’s because Georgia Governor Brian Kemp and others are calling Manuel and other #StopCopCity protestors — and you can stop me if you’ve heard this one before — terrorists.

This incident — the potential murder by cop of an environmental activist — would be unprecedented on U.S. soil, but it’s undeniably emblematic of the times. With great sadness, I recall the heavily militarized police force and hired private army deployed to confront us at Standing Rock during the NoDAPL movement. And I remember all too well being labeled a terrorist in response to my stand on behalf of our Grandmother Earth. But peaceful, legal dissent — whether it be on the front lines of a pipeline fight or in an Atlanta forest — must be protected! That’s the foundation of a healthy democracy, and we have to push back on this shameful activist-as-terrorist narrative at every turn.

On that note, I want to take a moment to say thank you. You may recall that, last congressional session, Lakota Law created a [blog](#) and action alert after the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 1374. Had the bill passed the Senate and been signed off on by the White House, this hideous law would, for all intents and purposes, have given law enforcement carte blanche to kill water protestors under the guise of protecting “infrastructure” (read: pipelines). But thanks in part to more than 33,000 of you who sent messages of dissent to your senators, the law died in the Senate.

It could come back, though. We’ll keep watching and let you know if it’s time to speak out again. We know that the Earth’s natural structure — her water and land — are far more critical than extractive infrastructure, so it’s important for all of us as her protectors to stay vigilant. Please know that I’m also reaching out to others who have direct knowledge of the developing situation with Terán so we can offer our continued support in the best possible way. There may, for instance, be an opportunity to call for an investigation and help Manuel’s mother gain clarity and justice for her son. Please stay tuned.

Wopila tanka — thank you for your willingness to take a stand!

Chase Iron Eyes

Co-Director and Lead Counsel

The Lakota People’s Law Project