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# Former US Justice Department staff says civil rights division 'destroyed'

Ex-employees say the Trump administration has rolled back enforcement of civil rights law in favour of the president's priorities.

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Attorney General Pam Bondi has rejected a letter that alleges the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division has abandoned its mission [File: Julia Demaree Nikhinson/AP Photo]

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“Every election brought changes, but the fundamental mission of our work remained the same. That’s why most of us planned to stay at the Division following the 2024 election,” the letter reads.

“But after witnessing this Administration destroy much of our work, we made the heartbreaking decision to leave — along with hundreds of colleagues, including about 75 percent of attorneys. Now, we must sound the alarm about the near destruction of DOJ’s once-revered crown jewel.”

The Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division was first created in 1957, in part to combat codified segregation and discrimination against Black people in the southern part of the US, during what was known as the Jim Crow era.

The division has also investigated and penalised patterns of discrimination in areas such as housing, policing and [voting rights](#).

But Trump and his allies have often depicted efforts to address racial inequality as a form of discrimination targeting white people.

Tuesday’s letter from the former Justice Department employees says that the Civil Rights Division’s focus has shifted to issues aligned with Trump’s own priorities.

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The letter cites [Attorney General Pam Bondi](#)’s decision to drop a lawsuit initiated under former President Joe Biden to challenge restrictions on voting access in the state of Georgia. It also points to the dismissal of another suit concerning alleged sexual abuse of unaccompanied migrant and asylum seeker children.

Under the leadership of Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon, the Civil Rights Division has also backtracked on previous reports that highlighted abuses at several police departments across the country.

Bondi and Dhillon have responded to the letter by saying that they are safeguarding the agency’s traditional mission.

“Its strong enforcement record on a wide range of priorities – including safeguarding our elections, ending burdensome consent decrees, and rooting out anti-Semitism and race-based admission on college campuses – is historic,” a spokesperson said in response to the letter.

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