

California police officer savagely beats great-grandmother

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A California Highway Patrol (CHP) officer savagely beat an unarmed woman on a freeway onramp July 1 in Los Angeles, California. The assault was captured on video by an onlooker and shared widely on social media. The beating comes amidst a nationwide escalation in police brutality and a push by the state to militarize the domestic police force.

In the video, a CHP officer tackles a woman to the ground, forces himself on top of her, and begins punching her repeatedly. The woman tries to protect herself, but the officer begins to target her face directly, landing repeated full-blown punches to her head.

The shooter of the video footage, David Diaz, told *CBS News* that there were at least fifteen punches thrown by the officer, the majority of them hitting the woman's face while the officer sat on top of her. Diaz remarked that the officer, who he described as a strong and big man, could have easily killed the woman.

The woman, whose age and name have not yet been released, was identified by her family as a "great-grandmother." Though the extent of her injuries is unknown, she is currently in the hospital.

The CHP claimed that the officer had been dispatched after receiving a call about a woman who was on the interstate 10 freeway. According to Diaz, the woman had begun to get off the freeway before being tackled and beaten. Assistant Chief of the CHP, Chris O'Quinn, also acknowledged this fact.

Diaz told the *Associated Press* in a phone interview that the woman was walking off the freeway when the officer began shouting at her. According to Diaz, the woman turned away from the officer and walked back onto the edge of the freeway. According to Diaz, the CHP officer "agitated the situation more than helped it."

"He grabs her and she kind of shuns him back - a

very natural instinct. Of course he is stronger than her so he grabs her, throws her down." Diaz continued, "With every punch, it's bouncing her head off the concrete."

According to other eyewitness reports, the woman "looked terrified... she looked just gone." The same witness said the woman appeared to be barefoot and was carrying around several bags. Several news sites have suggested that she was homeless. In Los Angeles many homeless people live next to freeway onramps.

Attorney and family spokesman Caree Harper held a press conference outside of the hospital where the woman is receiving treatment. She said, "We want the focus to be what he was doing to her, not what she was doing." Harper continued, "She was getting beat like an animal. No one should ever be beat like that."

After the repeated punches to her face, an off-duty cop ran up to the scene. The officer then handcuffed the woman. Despite the extensive bashing of the woman's face, the CHP did not report any injuries whatsoever in their police report. The woman was then taken for a 72-hour mental examination under custody.

O'Quinn told a press conference that he could not say why the officer responded in the way he did because it had not yet been evaluated. O'Quinn, however, defended the officer. He stated that the officer was more knowledgeable about freeway conditions than the "citizen." "The most dangerous thing we face is traffic," he said, suggesting that the officer was justified in brutalizing the woman for her own good. An investigation into the incident is underway.

This police beating comes amid an escalation of violence in the United States from police forces. In May an Atlanta SWAT team critically wounded a one-year-old toddler with a flash grenade. In the same month three police officers killed an unarmed man,

who was backing away from them, in a migrant farm worker community in Salinas, California. In April a man was shot to death as he fled from police in Long Beach, California, again, unarmed.

Just this past week a police officer in Indiana was caught on video pushing a paraplegic man out of his wheelchair and onto concrete, claiming that the man had driven over his foot.

In January of this year the CHP was forced to pay \$250,000 in damages to a pregnant woman who was abused by several officers. The woman was pulled over for talking on her cell phone; the police said she was trying to resist arrest in 5-mile-per-hour rush hour traffic. Four or five officers forced her, violently, to the ground with guns drawn. She was then kicked and hogtied. All of the involved officers remain on the force.



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