



Former DOJ Officials Call for Attorney General Barr's Resignation

Over 2,000 former officials from the Department of Justice (DOJ) signed a letter calling for the resignation of Attorney General William Barr, after he allowed President Trump to meddle in the sentencing of his associate, Roger Stone. The officials who signed the letter included political appointees and career officials who worked in both Republican and Democratic administrations. The signatories wrote that Barr's interference in the Stone case tarnished the department's reputation and undermined the work of the current employees within the DOJ. The letter was first published with 1,100 signatures, but has since risen to over 2,000.

The commotion at the Department of Justice began when President Trump sent a tweet saying the proposed nine-year sentence for Roger Stone was "horrible and unfair." The sentencing recommendation was made by the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington D.C., which had been handling the case against Stone. The next day, senior level officials at the Department of Justice intervened by ordering a new sentencing memo with lighter punishment. President Trump then sent another tweet, in which he commended Attorney General Barr for "taking charge" of the case. In the aftermath, all four prosecutors who had been litigating the case on behalf of the government abruptly resigned. In the letter calling for Barr's resignation, the former DOJ officials commended the four prosecutors as "heroic," and called on all current DOJ employees to report future political interference to the Inspector General.

Although William Barr has not shown an inclination to accept the demands of the former DOJ officials, he did rebuke President Trump for his social media behavior. Barr said it made his job impossible when the President was constantly providing "background commentary" on Twitter. He also reiterated the department's claim that the sentencing recommendation for Stone was far too harsh, and that it was legally appropriate to decrease the recommended punishment. President Trump also singled out the judge presiding over the case, Amy Berman Jackson, for criticism, saying she was biased because of her role in sentencing another Trump associate, Paul Manafort.

Around the country, prosecutors have been feeling the shockwaves of the confusion at the Department of Justice. One individual said in an interview that his clients were concerned about cooperating with investigations over fear of political interference. Another prosecutor said that any perceived political interference could have an impact on judges and juries who could think that cases weren't being handled objectively.

On the campaign trail, leading Democrats have called for Attorney General Barr to step down. Senators Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, and Amy Klobuchar all echoed the complaints of the former DOJ officials who penned the letter to Barr, and said he should resign immediately. Barr is due to testify in front of the House Judiciary Committee on March 31st, and Democratic lawmakers will certainly question him on the irregularity of his actions at the president's request.