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**For Immediate Release:  
June 1, 2020**

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## Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Alabama Gives Statement on the Death of George Floyd

BIRMINGHAM, AL – Today Grand Master Corey D. Hawkins, Sr., Esq., 11<sup>th</sup> Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Alabama, made the following statement in reference to the murder of Mr. George Floyd and the current state of affairs surrounding the slaying of African-Americans, at the hands of law enforcement.

“On behalf of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Alabama, we offer our sincerest condolences to the family of Mr. George Floyd. We have painfully watched, several times, the video of Minneapolis Police Officer, Derek Chauvin, kneeling with his knee on the neck of Mr. Floyd for almost nine minutes as he exclaimed that he could not breathe and pled for his life. Just as disturbing was that three other officers stood and watched as Mr. Floyd’s life slipped away. The knee to neck tactic used by Officer Chauvin would be considered animal cruelty if used on a dog. Is the Black Man’s life not more important than an animal’s?”

“Four police officers, who all should be charged with George Floyd’s murder, were hired to “protect and serve” our communities. As Alabama Prince Hall Masons, we do believe that most police officers are good officers who take their jobs of protecting and serving serious and treat people the way they want to be treated. They are to be commended. However, there are some who use their badges as a license to harass, brutalize, and kill people of color.”

“Sadly, this is nothing new. Many black men and women have been murdered by police officers with absolutely no recourse by the criminal justice system. We stand in support of Mr. Floyd’s family and the countless others whose relatives have died at the hands of police officers. We condemn the actions of law enforcement officials who have used their badges as licenses to kill. Those who have died are human beings. They are someone’s sons, daughters, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and friends.”

“As Prince Hall Masons we are taught that membership within this organization does not conflict with our duty to God, our country, our neighbor or ourselves. From Jimmie Lee Jackson, to Arthur Shores, to Ralph Abernathy, and many, many others, Prince Hall Masons in Alabama are no strangers to being on the frontlines of standing up and speaking out against injustices. While we **do not** condone violence, looting, and vandalism, we **do** condone peaceful protests, freedom of speech, and the right to assemble. Violence, looting, and vandalism is not the answer. If we want change, we must participate in peaceful, strategically planned protests and demonstrations. If we want change, we must participate in the electoral process. **Vote** locally, **vote** for state level offices, **vote** for those who represent your best interests in Washington, D.C. Most importantly, vote in favor of sheriffs, district attorneys, and judges that will bring trust and restore faith to the criminal justice system.”

“We are living in a country where many are more concerned about building a physical wall rather than tearing down the walls of systemic inequality and injustice. As Alabama Prince Hall Masons, we believe that **ALL LIVES MATTER**. However, all lives cannot matter until **BLACK LIVES MATTER**. We frequently recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, a country which currently seems to be “united” in name only. As we close out the recitation of the pledge, we enthusiastically say, “...One nation, under **GOD**, indivisible, with liberty and justice for **ALL**.” “Liberty and justice for **ALL**”, regardless of race, creed, color or socio-economic status!”

“The Prince Hall Masons of Alabama say that actions speak louder than words. Stand up America! Admit your shortcomings! Become the America that you say you are! Become the America that we know you can be!”