

To the Committee,

On March 11th, 2026, several Burlington Police officers, one identified via film as an Officer Gonzalez, utilized clear and heinous excessive use of force on peaceful protestors. Gonzalez deliberately violated a woman's First Amendment right to peaceful protest by throwing her violently to the ground and then shouting at her and fellow protestors. Let me repeat that: an armed man, literally covered in tactical gear head to toe, threw a woman to the ground, risking her life and body, because he did not like the way she was exercising her rights. It is despicable.

She had committed no crime. Gonzalez acted out of what, to my eyes, was a clear personal malignancy where there was no threat to himself, fellow officers, or any enforcement actions. Citizens have a right to film and witness police actions. The police have an obligation to remain calm, even in situations where they may feel they are stressed, and rely on their training to ensure the law is followed to the letter. Were Gonzalez and the other officers present not properly trained on how to conduct themselves in a situation as the one that transpired on Dorset Street? To swear the oath to protect and serve means that you are held to a higher standard. Officer Gonzalez clearly cannot rise to that standard, as well as the other Burlington and South Burlington police officers present at the scene who deployed tear gas (a chemical which is banned by international law, though the city of Burlington seems to feel is appropriate to deploy against its law abiding citizens), pepper spray, and excessive force.

This incident can only be interpreted as a deliberate attempt to intimidate and suppress peaceful protest by the Burlington and South Burlington Police Departments. I demand the immediate removal of Officer Gonzalez, without pay or "administrative leave." Citizens of Burlington are not safe while officers like himself are on the streets, violating the law at their will. His actions were abhorrent and not those of a man who has sworn to protect and serve the public, let alone the law.

As one of your constituents, police accountability is deeply important to me, as I believe it is important to you and my fellow residents on Burlington. I demand that a fair, independent investigation into the conduct of BPD's officers at the Dorset Street protest is conducted.

Regards,  
Keely Lyons  
Resident of Burlington, VT  
<https://vcjc.vermont.gov/use-force-policy>