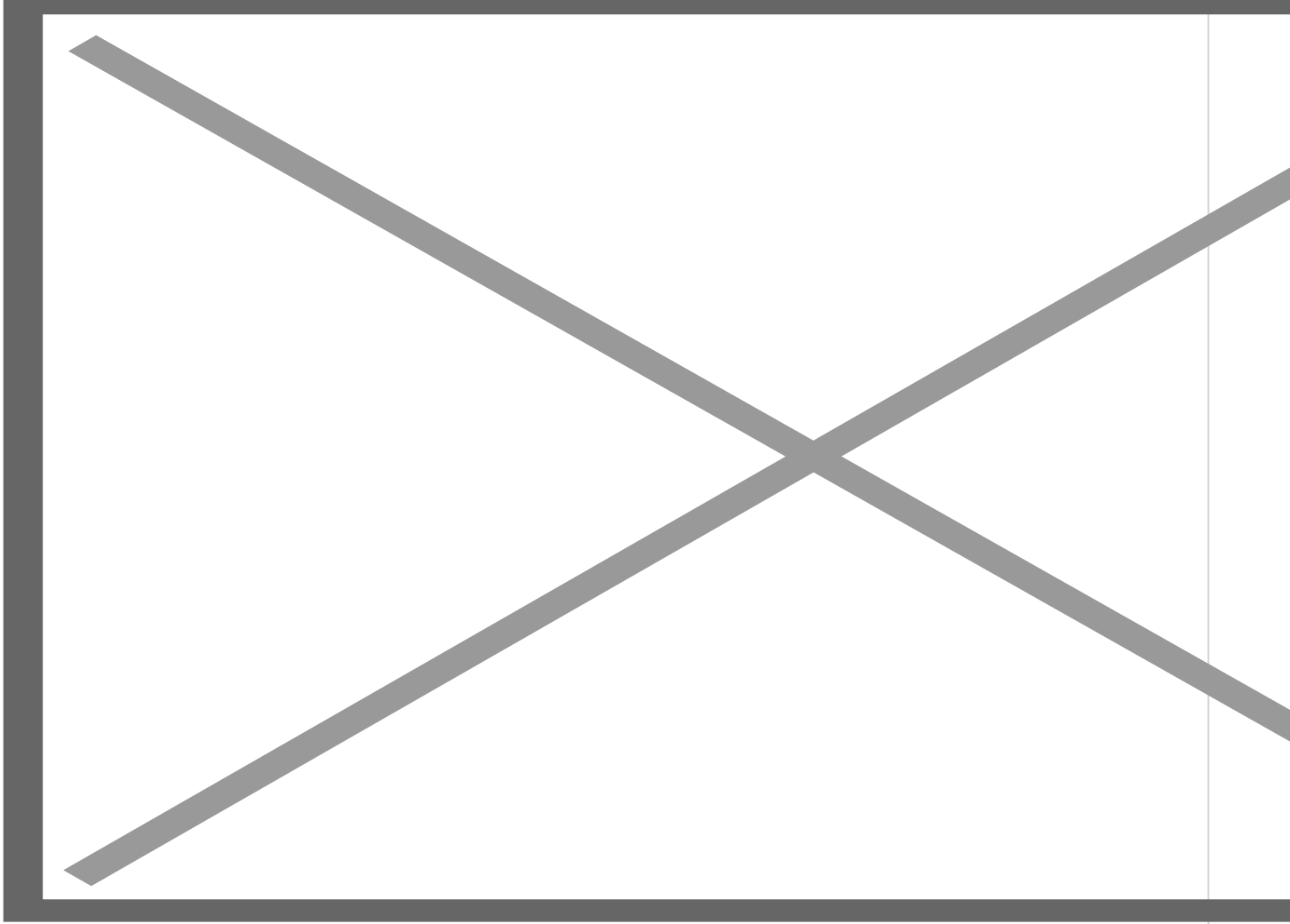


Human Rights Watch says Trump sits idly by amid Capitol occupation

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Trump supporters clash with police and security forces as they invade the inauguration platform of the U.S. Capitol. (Photo: AFP)

Washington, January 7 (RHC)-- A senior Human Rights Watch (HRW) official has blasted U.S. President Donald Trump for "sitting idly by" when his supporters attack the U.S. Capitol, while condoning the use of teargas and force against peaceful Black Lives Matter protesters.

"We are witnessing bedlam and chaos as angry mobs storm the US Capitol in a futile effort to overturn a legitimate national election," said Nicole Austin-Hillery, the executive director of the US Program at the Human Rights Watch. "This is what happens in other nations ruled by lawless autocrats who mobilize brigades to intimidate and attack political opponents," she added in a tweet.

She said Trump and his cohorts "sit idly by as unlawful activity overtakes the Capitol yet condones [sic] the use of force and teargas to suppress peaceful protesters exercising their right to free speech after the police killing of Black people." "The Rule of Law must be respected if we call this a democracy," Austin-Hillery noted.

Pro-Trump protesters stormed the US Capitol on Wednesday where the lawmakers were engaged in the process to certify the victory of President-elect Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential election. Hours later, the president deployed the National Guard to handle the protests. Trump also released a recorded video message, telling protesters to "go home," adding that the election had been "stolen," only after Biden emphatically called on him to ask his supporters on national TV to end the "insurrection."

Several world leaders and politicians across the world have denounced the Capitol chaos in tweets and statements. "Disgraceful scenes in US Congress. The United States stands for democracy around the world and it is now vital that there should be a peaceful and orderly transfer of power," said Boris Johnson, the prime minister of Britain, in a post on his Twitter account.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said his government was following the developments "minute by minute." "There is an important electoral process unfolding in the United States and I think we all want it and need it to unfold properly and peacefully. So we certainly hope that things will calm down," he said.

"Hopefully everything will return to normal shortly but we're going to continue to do what we need to do to make sure that Canadians are well served in our relationship with the United States regardless of how things unfold," he said.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg described the scenes in Washington, D.C. as "shocking." "The outcome of this democratic election must be respected," he tweeted.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said the enemies of democracy will rejoice in these "incomprehensible" Washington DC images. "Rebellious words [by Trump] become violent acts ... in the Capitol. The contempt for democratic institutions has a devastating effect," he added in a tweet. "Trump and his supporters should finally accept the decision of American voters and stop flouting democracy."

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