


Long Island man kicked by police officers after arrest to sue, demands prosecution

 By Eyewitness News

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MOUNT SINAI, Long Island (WABC) -- A Long Island man who was repeatedly kicked by police officers after he was arrested is planning a federal civil rights lawsuit against Suffolk County, the Suffolk County Police Department, and nearly a dozen officers.

Attorneys for Christopher Cruz announced his intention to sue Thursday, as well as his demand that Suffolk County District Attorney Tim Sini prosecute the officers.

The incident was caught on body camera footage, and two Suffolk County police officers have since been suspended without pay, Four others -- three officers and one supervisor -- have been placed on modified duty after attorneys say they failed to intervene.

"He surrendered with his hands up," attorney Fred Brewington said. "They beat him to the ground...It was violence against another human being by police officers who thought that they were above the law and engaged, not only in brutality, but in gang assault."

The confrontation happened in Mount Sinai on February 24, when the 30-year-old Cruz was arrested for allegedly crashing a stolen Jeep into two police cars during a chase.

Police said Cruz resisted arrest and repeatedly kicked and spit on officers. Cruz suffered injuries to his face and head, along with severe swelling.

"Mr. Cruz was subjected to an unprovoked attack by Suffolk County police officers who cursed, slapped, pushed, punched, kicked and otherwise violated Mr. Cruz in a vicious attack while he was handcuffed with his hands behind him," Cruz's attorneys wrote. "At no time did Mr. Cruz assault any officers, resist any officers, or fail to comply with the directions of officers."

Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart and County Executive Steve Bellone held a press conference Tuesday night to announce the suspensions and investigation by the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office.

"We hold our officers to the highest regards," Hart said. "The actions of these two officers are concerning, and what is concerning are the officers who did not intervene, which is a direct violation of our rules."

The officers have not yet been identified but Cruz's attorney is calling for them to be named and terminated.

"This is not an isolated incident in Suffolk or Nassau," Brewington said. "This is a terrible atrocity, particularly when a so-called boss was on the scene."

Cruz was charged with third-degree grand larceny, second-degree assault, third-degree criminal mischief and resisting arrest.

"To add insult to the real injuries suffered by Mr. Cruz, police officers wrote and gave false statements and testimony and subjected Mr. Cruz to malicious abuse of criminal process, fabrication of evidence, filing false documents and perjured themselves," Cruz's attorneys wrote. "What is clear is that the police lied and provided false information in furtherance of an official investigation into the incident."