

We are not criminals, homeless New Yorkers tell cops in protest outside NYPD headquarters

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Smith for News

New York City's homeless rally outside of NYPD headquarters on Tuesday.

Homeless New Yorkers have a message for the [NYPD](#): homelessness is not a crime.

A dozen protesters gathered in front of the NYPD headquarters on Tuesday to speak out against what they called misuse of disorderly conduct charges against the homeless.

"The police use disorderly conduct charges as a pretext to arrest homeless people, even when they're not breaking any laws," says [Brandon King](#), head of Picture the Homeless, a [Bronx](#)-based advocacy group.

Along with the homeless, African Americans and Latino New Yorkers have been the target of the NYPD's "racial policing", said [Sunita Patel](#), staff attorney from the center for constitutional rights. "It's time to put human dignity and civil rights before meeting the quota," she says.

[Central Park](#) and the city's major bus and train stations seem to be the NYPD's hot spots for such enforcement, the protesters said. [John T. Jones](#), 39, homeless since 1997, said he has been arrested at [Penn Station](#) while "picking up [MetroCards](#) from the subway station."

"Just because you are homeless doesn't mean your civil rights are diminished," said [Jean Rice](#), 71.

NYPD spokesman [Paul Browne](#) said disorderly conduct arrests of homeless people have declined. "Homeless represented 4.9% of disorderly conduct arrests year to date - a 32% reduction compared to the same period last year," he said.

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