

# Police brutality probed in East P.A.; girl files complaint

An investigation into the allegations of police brutality involving a San Mateo County sheriff's deputy and a 15-year-old East Palo Alto girl is under way, but the deputy will remain on the job during the probe, according to a report released by the sheriff's office today.

Neomi Williams and her attorney Ladoris Cordell filed a formal complaint against San Mateo County alleging that Deputy James Burns tore out a section of braided hair from the girl's head during a disturbance on an East Palo Alto street on April 22.

The complaint, which must be filed before a legal suit against the county can be filed, asks for \$500,000 in damages.

Deputy Burns' supervisor, Sheriff John R. McDonald Jr., who had earlier stated that his office would investigate the matter if a formal complaint were filed, released a letter today indicating he had received the complaint and was proceeding with the investigation.

The Williams family and Ms. Cordell presented their case to the East Palo Alto Municipal Council on May 2, asking that they recommend to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors that Burns be suspended and public hearings be set on police harassment in the community.

The council voted in favor of the recommendation, stating they would go to the County Board of Supervisors for formal action on the matter.

"In answer to the council's request that Deputy Burns be immediately removed from the East Palo Alto patrol, it is my belief that to remove Burns would be to prejudge an allegation," McDonald said.

"This action would seem to me to be a gross injustice to a deputy who has merely been accused," he said.

"It is not my intention to remove Burns at this time," McDonald added.

McDonald said that at the completion of the investigation into the case, he would make a full report to the East Palo Alto Municipal Council, with copies of the findings to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, district attorney's office and grand jury.

"If our investigation indicates it is warranted," McDonald said "we shall take immediate corrective action."