

1965 Selma to Montgomery March Fast Facts

By CNN Library
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Here's a look at what you need to know about the [1965 Selma to Montgomery March in Alabama](#).

Facts:

Throughout March of 1965, a group of demonstrators faced violence as they attempted to march from Selma, Alabama, to Montgomery, Alabama, to demand the right to vote for black people.

One of the pivotal days was March 7, when 17 people were injured by police, including future [Congressman John Lewis](#). Since that time, March 7th has been known as "Bloody Sunday."

The march has been reenacted many times on its anniversary. It is about 50 miles (80km) from Selma to Montgomery.

Timeline:

February 1965 - Marches and demonstrations over voter registration prompt Alabama Governor George C. Wallace to ban nighttime demonstrations in Selma and Marion, Alabama.

February 18, 1965 - During a march in Marion, state troopers attack the demonstrators. State trooper James Bonard Fowler shoots and kills Jimmie Lee Jackson. Fowler was charged with murder in 2007 and [pleaded guilty to manslaughter in 2010](#).

March 7, 1965 - About 600 people begin a march from Selma, Alabama to Montgomery, Alabama, led by John Lewis and Hosea Williams. Marchers demand an end to discrimination in voter registration. At the Edmund Pettus Bridge, state and local lawmen attack the marchers with Billy clubs and tear gas, driving them back to Selma.

March 9, 1965 - [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) leads another march to the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The march is largely symbolic; as arranged previously, the crowd turns back at a barricade of state troopers. Demonstrations are held in cities across the U.S. to show solidarity with the Selma marchers.

March 9, 1965 - President Lyndon Johnson speaks out against the violence in Selma and urges both sides to respect the law.

March 9, 1965 - [Unitarian Universalist minister James Reeb](#), in Selma to join marchers, is attacked by a group of white men and beaten. He dies of his injuries two days later.

March 10, 1965 - The U.S. Justice Department files suit in Montgomery, Alabama asking for an order to prevent the state from punishing any person involved in a demonstration for civil rights.

March 17, 1965 - Federal District Court Judge Frank M. Johnson, Jr. rules in favor of the marchers. "The law is clear that the right to petition one's government for the redress of grievances may be exercised in large groups."

March 18, 1965 - Governor Wallace goes before the state legislature to condemn Johnson's ruling. He states that Alabama cannot provide the security measures needed, blames the federal government, and says he will call on the federal government for help.

March 19, 1965 - Governor Wallace sends a telegram to President Johnson asking for help, saying that the state does not have enough troops and cannot bear the financial burden of calling up the Alabama National Guard.

March 20, 1965 - President Johnson issues an executive order federalizing the Alabama National Guard and authorizes whatever federal forces the Defense Secretary deems necessary.

March 21, 1965 - About 3,200 people march out of Selma for Montgomery under the protection of federal troops. They walk about 12 miles a day and sleep in fields at night.

March 25, 1965 - The marchers reach the state capitol in Montgomery. The number of marchers grows to about 25,000.

August 6, 1965 - President Lyndon Johnson signs the [Voting Rights Act of 1965](#).