

# ACLU denounces 'demonstration of militarized' police force at Utah protests

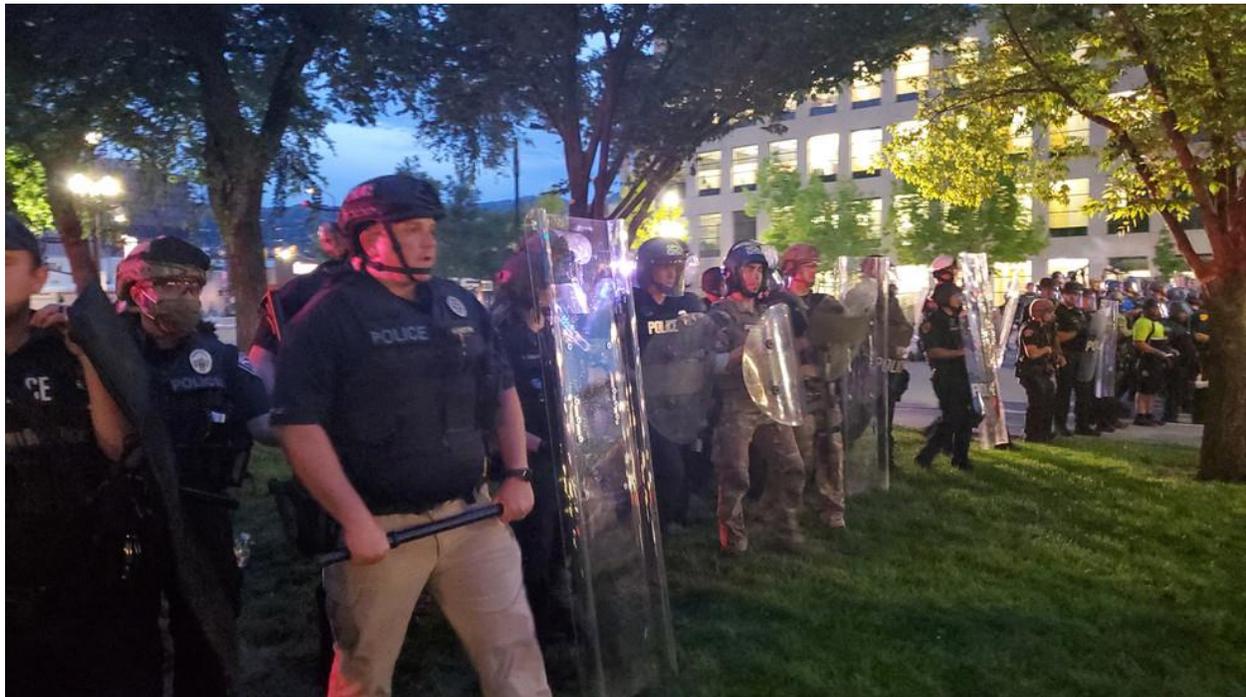
KUTV

by McKenzie Stauffer

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<https://kutv.com/news/local/aclu-utah-denounces-demonstration-of-militarized-police-force-at-protests>

<https://kjzz.com/news/local/aclu-utah-denounces-demonstration-of-militarized-police-force-at-protests>



*American Civil Liberties Union of Utah is speaking out against law enforcement's alleged actions at recent protests, calling it "overwhelming demonstration of militarized, state-sanctioned police violence and disproportionate use of government power." (Photo: KUTV) (Photo: Larry D. Curtis / KUTV)*

(KUTV) — The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah is speaking out against law enforcement's actions at recent protests, calling it "overwhelming demonstration of militarized, state-sanctioned police violence and disproportionate use of government power."

The nonprofit organization released a statement on Saturday hours before a "National Day of Protest Against Police Crimes" was set to take place at the Utah State Capitol Building at 7 p.m.

ACLU's statement recalled its legal observers have "witnessed a concerning pattern of viewpoint discrimination and disproportionate and militarized police action in response to protests and First Amendment speech that criticizes elected leaders and law enforcement in Utah."

ACLU UT Statement Police Crackdown by McKenzie Stauffer on Scribd

[https://www.scribd.com/document/469635876/ACLU-UT-Statement-Police-Crackdown#from\\_embed](https://www.scribd.com/document/469635876/ACLU-UT-Statement-Police-Crackdown#from_embed)

The document stated that "the founding of this nation, the Declaration of Independence, and the U.S. Constitution were all the result of public acts of civil disobedience. We must acknowledge that our current form of government was made possible by resisters, organizers, and protestors against complacency and tyranny."

The statement cited several instances when the police have clashed with protesters including: demonstrations in January against alleged mistreatment of homeless people in Salt Lake City, multiple protests against police brutality since May 30 and calling out the Provo mayor and police chief's responses to protests that took place on Center Street.

"We expect Provo's elected officials and law enforcement to follow the Constitution and allow free speech activities in the city without regard to the identity and residence of the people protesting," the statement read.

ACLU pointed out that COVID-19-related protests were allowed to gather without police intervention. The group claimed that police force was only used on those protesting law enforcement.

"The right to protest and freedom of speech belongs to everyone. The government cannot discriminate simply because it does not like what is said," part of the statement read.

During incidents when [protesters] openly and loudly criticized law enforcement and local government, they were met with overwhelming demonstration of militarized, state-sanctioned police violence and disproportionate use of government power to quell speech and disperse crowds engaged in free speech activities.

ACLU said in part that the result of militarized responses to the first amendment criticisms of police action conveys the message that protesters who criticizes law enforcement won't be tolerated.

American Civil Liberties Union of Utah is speaking out against law enforcement's alleged actions at recent protests, calling it "overwhelming demonstration of militarized, state-sanctioned police violence and disproportionate use of government power." (Photo: 2News viewer)

ACLU is calling on Utah state and local law enforcement agencies to do the following:

- Do not deploy to protests when there is not a clear and present danger to public safety;
- Clarify that individuals engaged in First Amendment Activities are not engaged in unlawful assembly;
- Halt the dispersal and arrest of individuals engaged in First Amendment activities that do not pose a present danger to public safety;
- Halt the use of force against and detention of journalists and individuals engaged in legal observation and allow them to stay even when a decision has been made to deem an assembly unlawful and disperse it;

- End the practice of targeting of individuals who participate in and organize protests for extra scrutiny for alleged civil and criminal offenses such as driving with expired registration;
- Prohibit “kettling” or mass arrests and honor the Fourth Amendment: require individualized suspicion or probable cause in order to detain or arrest a person engaged in criminal activity;
- Clarify incidents when First Amendment activities can be considered unlawful assemblies to be consistent with Constitutional principles and case law;
- Require clear and visible identification of officers deployed in crowd control;
- Require any live video feeds of events be simultaneously made available to the public;
- Require body cameras to be worn and activated during protests and any footage in which any level of force was used for crowd control be submitted for review and publicly released in full;
- Require ample time and channels for safe dispersal of assemblies deemed unlawful;
- Emphasize maintenance of peace and de-escalation;
- Require all officers that participate in crowd control to undergo enhanced bias training before they participate in protest dispersal.
- This comes as protesters across the country, and in Utah, have repeatedly gathered to call for police and criminal justice reform.

In wake of the movement, the Salt Lake City Police Department banned chokeholds, a practice they didn't teach in the past but wanted to make sure it would not be used in the future. The city also formed the Commission on Racial Equality in Policing, which will discuss and make recommendations to city officials regarding police policy, budgeting and culture.

When the committee was announced on June 25, Rev. France Davis, Pastor Emeritus of the Calvary Baptist Church, told 2News, “As we form the committee, realize what kind of power, what kind of budget it has — then we’ll know whether it’s just another paper stamping committee or whether it has some real teeth.”

The local NAACP announced police reform efforts in June. Since then, several meetings between the groups involved have happened. However, any legislative changes will likely wait until 2021.

To read the entire statement click here.

<https://www.acluutah.org/legislation/the-community-lobbyist/item/1634-aclu-of-utah-statement-recent-police-crackdowns-on-the-right-to-protest>