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## **ACLU of Utah Response to Recent Developments in Abdi Mohamed Shooting Investigation**

The ACLU of Utah is disappointed that the Salt Lake County District Attorney's office continues to refuse to release body camera and surveillance video footage of the February 2016 shooting of then-17-year-old Abdi Mohamed.

In a press conference on Monday, District Attorney Sim Gill announced that his office has concluded that the shooting of Mr. Mohamed by two Salt Lake City police officers was "justified" under state law. Mr. Gill also said his office would continue to withhold from the public all body camera and surveillance video footage of the incident. In addition, Mr. Gill announced that his office will charge Mr. Mohamed with several serious crimes, including aggravated robbery, a first-degree felony that carries a potential life sentence in prison, and will try to prosecute him as an adult.

"We are shocked and dismayed that the government still refuses to release the body camera and surveillance video footage, which the public has the right to review under Utah law," said John Mejia, ACLU of Utah Legal Director. "It is disturbing that a prosecutor would publicly describe the footage in a way that is positive to the government's version of events, but we are not allowed to see that footage for ourselves. GRAMA was passed exactly so we don't have to take the government's word for it."

Last month, Salt Lake County refused a request for the footage by the ACLU of Utah made under the Government Records Access and Management Act (GRAMA). In doing so, the County argued that the footage related to an ongoing investigation into the shooting of Mr. Mohamed. On Monday, the County asserted that it is now withholding the footage because of the criminal prosecution of Mr. Mohamed.

"The County has defended its lack of transparency in refusing to release the footage by asserting that it seeks to protect the impartiality and integrity of their investigation and prosecution of Abdi," said Mejia. "Yet today, the County has publicly asserted that Abdi was engaged in serious criminal wrongdoing and, at the same time, publicly cleared the involved officers of any wrongdoing. In making these announcements, the County gave an account of the

still-withheld footage that was favorable to the officers, and disclosed other information that is also relevant to the prosecution. The public deserves to see the footage, not just hear the government's selective version of the footage, to help us make up our own minds on issues such as whether the County's decision is correct and whether there needs to be accountability or policy change in the wake of this incident."

The shooting of Mr. Mohamed highlights several issues related to law enforcement accountability and government transparency, including: the importance of timely and fair release of public information related to critical incidents involving violence between police and community members; the need for independent investigations of critical incidents by investigators who will not be engaged in possible future criminal prosecutions of community members injured by police; and the need for wholesale cultural reform among law enforcement more generally, including shifting from a warrior mentality to a guardian mentality.

The ACLU of Utah is committed to continuing its multi-faceted work on these issues, including on-going efforts with the Salt Lake City Police Department to improve law enforcement conduct directed toward and in collaboration with community members. We will also continue to push for state-level policy improvements that increase transparency, accountability and fairness in police practices throughout Utah.

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