

ACLU Utah condemns 'disproportionate and militarized' police response to recent protests

The ACLU of Utah released a statement Saturday, condemning "militarized, state-sanctioned police violence" against protesters who criticize law enforcement and local government.

FOX13

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SALT LAKE CITY — The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Utah released a statement Saturday addressing incidents that they say constitute police overreach in response to lawful protests. The ACLU of Utah wrote that their "Statement on Recent Police Crackdowns on the Right to Protest" was released ahead of rallies planned in the state and across the country. At least one protest is planned for Saturday evening at the State Capitol for what organizers are calling a "National Day of Protest Against Police Crimes."

"We are here and we are watching," a Facebook post from the organization read, adding that they released the statement with the intent of "putting Utah police agencies on notice."

The statement brought up multiple instances when police clashed with protesters — from demonstrations in January against alleged mistreatment of Salt Lake City's homeless, to the multiple protests against police brutality and racial injustice starting May 30. It also called out the Provo mayor and police chief's responses to recent protests that took place there.

The result of these militarized responses to first amendment criticisms of police action, however, conveys a chilling message to protestors that criticism of law enforcement will not be tolerated," the statement read in part.

The ACLU also pointed out that protests against COVID-19-related restrictions and closures were allowed to gather without police intervention and 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."

[Click here to read the full statement.](#)

