

ACLU of Wisconsin: Statement on deployment of national guard in Kenosha

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KENOSHA – Gov. Tony Evers today deployed the Wisconsin National Guard to Kenosha, where protests have erupted after the police shooting of Jacob Blake, who remains hospitalized in critical condition.

ACLU of Wisconsin Executive Director Chris Ott issued the following statement:

“Deploying the National Guard in response to people exercising their right to protest is unnecessary. People in Kenosha have a constitutional right to express their indignation over the police shooting of Jacob Blake, as well as to demand an end to the epidemic of police violence that has systematically harmed and killed Black and brown people for generations.”

“Just this afternoon, we saw local police use pepper spray against the crowd and journalists outside the Kenosha Safety Building, where the mayor was addressing the crowd. Based on what we’ve witnessed in protests across the country, we know that militarized policing often only serves to exacerbate tensions, and opens the door to more police misconduct and violence. The response to protesters over police brutality cannot be even more brutality; entering a community armed with tear gas, rubber bullets and riot gear achieves just the opposite effect.”

“We urge state and local law enforcement, as well as the National Guard, to respect demonstrators’ First Amendment rights and avoid making arrests or using force, including tear gas, unless necessary to protect human life. Tear gas has been banned as a method of warfare and should never be used against protesters exercising their constitutional rights — particularly during a pandemic spread by

coughing, and which attacks people's respiratory systems.”

“The ACLU of Wisconsin will have teams of legal observers at the protests standing guard to monitor law enforcement actions. ”

More information on protesters' rights, including the right to record police, is available online: <https://www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/protesters-rights/>