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Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs

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Justice Department Announces Investigation of the City of Phoenix and the Phoenix Police Department

Attorney General Merrick B. Garland and Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke for the Civil Rights Division announced today that the Justice Department has opened a pattern or practice investigation into the City of Phoenix and the Phoenix Police Department (PhxPD).

This investigation will assess all types of use of force by PhxPD officers, including deadly force. The investigation will also seek to determine whether PhxPD engages in retaliatory activity against people for conduct protected by the First Amendment; whether PhxPD engages in discriminatory policing; and whether PhxPD unlawfully seizes or disposes of the belongings of individuals experiencing homelessness. In addition, the investigation will assess the City and PhxPD's systems and practices for responding to people with disabilities. The investigation will include a comprehensive review of PhxPD policies, training, supervision, and force investigations, as well as PhxPD's systems of accountability, including misconduct complaint intake, investigation, review, disposition, and discipline.

Department of Justice officials informed Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, PhxPD Chief Jeri Williams, and other City officials of the investigation. As part of this investigation, the Department of Justice will reach out to community groups and members of the public to learn about their experiences with PhxPD.

"When we conduct pattern or practice investigations to determine whether the Constitution or federal law has been violated, our aim is to promote transparency and accountability," said Attorney General Merrick Garland. "This increases public trust, which in turn increases public safety. We know that law enforcement shares these goals."

"One of the highest priorities of the Civil Rights Division is to ensure that every person in this country benefits from policing that is lawful, effective, transparent, and free from discrimination," said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke. "Police officers across the country must use their authority in a manner that adheres to the Constitution, complies with federal civil rights laws and respects human dignity."

The investigation is being conducted pursuant to the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which prohibits state and local governments from engaging in a pattern or practice of conduct by law enforcement officers that deprives individuals of rights protected by the Constitution or federal law. The statute allows the Department of Justice to remedy such misconduct through civil litigation. This is the seventy-third investigation of a law enforcement agency conducted pursuant to this statute since it was enacted in 1994. The department will be assessing law enforcement practices under the First, Fourth, and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, as well as under the Safe Streets Act of 1968; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Special Litigation Section of the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, in Washington, D.C., will conduct this investigation. Individuals with relevant information are encouraged to contact the Department of Justice via email at Phoenix.Community@usdoj.gov or by toll free phone at (866) 432-0335. Individuals can also report civil rights violations regarding this or other matters using the Civil Rights Division's new reporting portal, available at <https://civilrights.justice.gov/>.

Information specific to the Civil Rights Division's Police Reform Work can be found here:

<https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/922421/download>. View the Spanish translation of this press release [here](#).

Component(s):

Civil Rights Division

Civil Rights - Special Litigation Section

Office of the Attorney General

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