



PRESS RELEASE

Justice Department Announces Successful Conclusion of Agreement with the City of Yonkers, New York and the Yonkers Police Department to Ensure Constitutional Policing

Tuesday, December 3, 2024

For Immediate Release

Office of Public Affairs

The Justice Department announced today the successful conclusion of its agreement with the City of Yonkers, New York, and the Yonkers Police Department (YPD). The agreement required YPD to improve its policies and practices regarding the use of force, stops, searches, and arrests, the protection of First Amendment rights, misconduct investigations and discipline, and community policing. Over the past eight years, the city and YPD have implemented all of the reforms required by the agreement and sustained those reforms for more than a year. Today, the Justice Department agreed to terminate the agreement and commends the city and YPD on their achievements.

“The success of Yonkers and the Yonkers Police Department under this agreement demonstrates the fundamental truth that fair, constitutional and effective policing can enhance public safety and promote trust between police and the community they are sworn to protect and serve,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division. “Through this agreement, the city and YPD have significantly decreased

settlement payouts on excessive force claims, and from 2017 to 2023, violent crimes in Yonkers also fell substantially. We commend YPD leadership, including former YPD Commissioners Charles Gardner and John Mueller, current YPD Commissioner Christopher Sapienza, as well as civilian staff and officers for their commitment to ensure constitutional policing for the people of Yonkers. Our settlements with police departments are of little utility unless real work and effort is put in to ensure that reforms are brought to life and successfully implemented.”

“Since the commencement of our investigation in 2007, the Yonkers Police Department has worked assiduously and cooperatively to implement significant reforms which ensure that its officers are well trained, well informed and guided on appropriate uses of force, and that a thorough and robust review system is in place to identify potentially problematic incidents, officers, training and tactics,” said U.S. Attorney Damian Williams for the Southern District of New York. “The Yonkers Police Department has achieved substantial compliance with all provisions of the agreement and established policies and programs that demonstrate a dedication and commitment to serving the community and ensuring its safety and well-being. I commend the Yonkers Police Department for its efforts.”

Over the period the agreement has been in place, there are substantial indications that the agreement has led to improvements in the constitutionality and effectiveness of YPD’s policing.

- The city has experienced a significant reduction in excessive force settlement payouts due to a marked decrease in allegations of unlawful uses of force.
- YPD’s Internal Affairs Department has dramatically improved its average times to complete critical use-of-force investigations, from 245 days in 2019, down to 69 days in 2023.
- YPD’s Internal Affairs Department has significantly reduced its average times for completing civilian misconduct complaint investigations, from 236 days in 2019, to 72 days in 2023.
- The City of Yonkers has also experienced a 22% reduction in violent crimes over the last five years.

The Civil Rights Division’s Special Litigation Section and the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York jointly handled the matter.

The Justice Department’s investigations have led to significant reforms of law enforcement agencies nationwide. For example, the Seattle Police Department [reduced](#) the use of serious force by 60%, and Seattle officers now use force in less than one-quarter of 1% of all events to which they respond. In Baltimore, the independent consent decree monitor [found](#) that officers use force less often and the force they do use is more likely to be consistent with department policy and the law. And under the consent decree in Albuquerque, use of force [declined](#) by 25% and violations of the force policy fell by half.

The technical assistance letter for Yonkers can be found [here](#).

The settlement agreement with Yonkers can be found [here](#).

Additional information about the Civil Rights Division's work can be found [here](#).

Updated February 6, 2025

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