

Statement of Support for #StopITOA from Stop Urban Shield Coalition

As a growing collaboration of organizations working to fight the militarization and policing of our communities, the Stop Urban Shield Coalition stands with all those demanding an end to the Illinois Tactical Officers Association's (ITOA) annual conference that will be taking place this year from October 9th to 13th. Almost identical to Urban Shield, the ITOA conference brings together police, SWAT teams, EMTs, and weapons vendors to showcase weapons and conduct highly militarized trainings based on extreme fearmongering, Islamophobia, and racism.

While police officials claim that trainings like the ITOA Conference and Urban Shield are necessary to prepare law enforcement and health responders in dealing with crises, we know that our communities become the crisis to be responded to. These kinds of militarized programs seek to expand the power and capacity of law enforcement, encouraging and arming them to treat marginalized people - particularly Black, Muslim, Migrant and gender non-conforming people - as threats to be managed, controlled, neutralized, and killed.

We will challenge any expansion of policing because of its fundamentally violent role in our communities, and stand with the organizations who have been fighting ITOA, including Assata's Daughters, CAIR - Chicago, American Friends Service Committee, War Resisters League, and For the People Artist Collective. The growing resistance everywhere to ongoing state violence compels us to carry on more determined in our struggle for self-determination. We call for an immediate end to the ITOA Conference and Urban Shield, and demand that funds instead be invested in the resources that address crises that our communities face, including mental healthcare, housing, and education – and not militarization and policing.