

MACLC

Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition

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Civil Liberties Coalition Calls on Bloomberg, Kelly to Dissolve NYPD Demographics Unit and End Surveillance of Muslim Communities and Student Groups

Demands Community Control Mechanism & City, State, and Federal Oversight for the NYPD

February 27, 2012 (New York, NY)—In the wake of yet more revelations regarding the NYPD Demographics Unit’s surveillance of Muslim communities in New York City, Long Island, and the Tri-State Area, and of the NYPD’s spying on Muslim student associations (MSAs) at universities along the eastern seaboard, the Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC) calls on Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Police Commissioner Ray Kelly to dissolve the NYPD Demographics Unit and end surveillance of Muslim communities. MACLC also reiterates its demands that local, state and federal officials investigate this rogue surveillance program, that the City Council institute an independent community control and oversight mechanism for the NYPD, and that in the absence of the above, Commissioner Kelly and NYPD spokesperson Paul Browne step down.

According to secret NYPD documents obtained by the Associated Press, the NYPD engaged in blanket, covert surveillance of Muslim communities’ constitutionally-protected activities absent any suspicion of criminal wrongdoing. Using so-called “mosque crawlers,” the NYPD created secret files analyzing private conversations among Tri-State Area Muslims about current events. Through covert methods typically reserved for organized crime gangs, the NYPD targeted—and criminalized—entire communities. This was done not to pursue any specific criminal suspect but, according to one of the NYPD reports, “to assess the general opinions and general activity of these communities.” These documents came in the wake of others detailing the NYPD’s surveillance of MSAs, as part of a larger effort to map all aspects of Muslim public life in New York City and beyond.

When questioned about the propriety and legality of their methods, city officials have once more chosen to respond dismissively and unapologetically. Moreover, Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Kelly’s refusal to answer reporters’ questions as to whether this covert NYPD surveillance program still exists makes clear that this is likely an ongoing harm. New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman has thus far declined to investigate the clandestine program. And the White House has not commented at all, although it partly funded the NYPD surveillance program, according to a report published by the Associated Press today.

“The NYPD’s monitoring of places of worship, community spaces, and student groups from New York City to Long Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, on the basis of religion and ethnicity puts the NYPD completely out of bounds,” said Sarah Sayeed, a MACLC member. “This

is not what the police are supposed to do in an open and democratic society. Being Muslim cannot be a lead warranting surveillance. The Mayor and Commissioner must put an end to their surveillance program immediately.”

“There have to be checks and balances,” stated Fahd Ahmed, a MACLC member. “We commend New Jersey for launching an investigation and cannot accept that our own City Council and Attorney General here in New York do nothing. We also insist that Congress, the federal Justice Department and the White House intervene since this covert spying program was partly funded by Washington. The NYPD cannot continue to operate with impunity and without oversight.”

MACLC is a New York-based coalition of citizens, community and faith leaders, organizers, advocates, attorneys, and organizations. MACLC aims to give voice to absent perspectives on issues of national security, counterterrorism, law enforcement, and civil rights, especially as they impact Muslim communities in post-9/11 New York City.

Submitted on behalf of the Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition: ([MACLC Weblog](#))

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