



Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition supports lawyers' call for an end to NYPD spying on American Muslims and for greater oversight of the NYPD

February 6, 2013 (New York, NY). The Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC) welcomes Monday's court filing by civil rights lawyers seeking a federal court injunction prohibiting the NYPD from continuing its blanket surveillance of American Muslims. Since 2002, the NYPD has engaged in a secret program that involved monitoring and mapping American Muslims in New York City and its surrounding environs. As part of this program, the NYPD sent undercover officers and informants in American-Muslim neighborhoods, mosques, and student organizations, keeping detailed records of conversations, community members' religious and political beliefs, as well as other every-day activities.

This vast surveillance program violates what are known as the Handschu Guidelines, the rules governing the NYPD's intelligence-gathering capacity. The Guidelines restricts the NYPD's ability to monitor people when there is no "reasonable indication" of unlawful activity. Since 2002, the NYPD has been doing just that in American Muslim communities.

"Not only does the surveillance of law-abiding American Muslims violate the NYPD's own guidelines, as the Handschu lawyers have illustrated, but it violates our core constitutional principles of equal protection and freedom of religion," says Tahanie Aboushi, a lawyer and MACLC member.

According to community organizer and activist Faiza N. Ali, "Ongoing surveillance of American Muslims has devastating effects on our communities. It makes people hesitate to speak their mind, to practice their religion freely, and creates a pervasive atmosphere of mistrust with law enforcement."

This latest move by the lawyers in the Handschu case is also an important reminder of the NYPD's long history of overstepping and profiling – and that American Muslims have been preceded by African Americans, civil rights activists, and anti-war groups.

MACLC further supports the Handschu lawyers' call for an independent NYPD oversight body. This call has been echoed by a broad coalition of civil rights groups and community organizations who reject both religious profiling and racial profiling, and who believe that greater law enforcement accountability is vital to protecting the rights and the safety of all New Yorkers. New Yorkers need independent oversight of the NYPD, whether through court order or City Council legislation.

The Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (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.

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