



## **MACLC Welcomes First Step Toward Ending Unlawful NYPD Spying**

**April 16, 2014** (New York, NY). The New York City Police Department (NYPD) [confirmed yesterday](#) that it has disbanded the controversial “Demographics Unit” responsible for covertly mapping where American Muslims live, pray, and socialize in New York City and beyond.

The announcement followed a meeting last Wednesday between Police Commissioner Bill Bratton, other senior NYPD officials, and several members of the Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC), as well as other community-based activists. The meeting resulted from a request by police reform and civil rights advocates, and the participants used the opportunity to articulate how the NYPD’s dragnet has harmed American Muslim communities and why it must come to an end. MACLC has been at the forefront of efforts to reform the NYPD’s troubling stance towards Muslim Americans since the Department published its controversial “Radicalization in the West” report in 2007.

MACLC welcomes the NYPD’s decision to disband the Demographics Unit (also known as the “Zone Assessment Unit”), which failed to produce a single lead in over a decade and stigmatized entire communities in New York City. At the same time, MACLC recognizes that this announcement is just a first step. Demographic mapping was but one dimension of a sprawling police surveillance apparatus that continues to treat entire congregations and community groups as “terrorism enterprises” without suspicion of criminal activity.

MACLC calls for an end to all aspects of the Intelligence Bureau’s unlawful spying program.

“While we have long demanded that the NYPD shut down the Zone Assessment Unit, that step constitutes only modest progress,” explained Ramzi Kassem, Associate Professor of Law at the City University of New York and Director of the Creating Law Enforcement Accountability & Responsibility (CLEAR) project. “That unit should have never existed in the first place and other damaging and unlawful aspects of the police surveillance program endure.”

“Entire congregations, organizations, Muslim Student Associations, businesses should no longer be placed under police surveillance without concrete suspicion of criminal conduct,” said Linda Sarsour, Executive Director of the Arab American Association of New York.

Monami Maulik, Founder and Executive Director of DRUM - South Asian Organizing Center, added, “There are many unanswered questions about whether the already collected data will continue to be used, or if it will be segregated and out of reach for future policing activities. We are also concerned about whether profiling practices will continue in other forms.”

In addition to placing incoming police officials on notice of the very real harms of surveillance, MACLC members attending the April 9 meeting laid out their expectations for meaningful change, including a process for providing input and receiving information on the NYPD’s effort to revamp the Department’s intelligence gathering guidelines. New rules must also be put in place to ensure that the NYPD will not engage in intelligence operations without, at a minimum, reasonable suspicion of criminal activity and reliable, independent mechanisms to enforce strict compliance with that standard.

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**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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