



Muslim community groups respond to NYPD 'terrorism enterprise investigations'

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An AP report today revealed that the NYPD had designated mosques and Islamic organizations across New York City as terrorist organizations, seemingly in order to justify long-term surveillance without specific evidence of criminal wrongdoing. City Comptroller John Liu also announced that his department has already started auditing the NYPD's Domain Awareness System, which involves 3,000 surveillance cameras city wide. Community organizations including the Arab-American Association of New York, Desis Rising Up and Moving, and the Council on American and Islamic Relations asked Liu to expand his audit to the department intelligence division as a whole in light of the AP's findings.

Linda Sarsour, whose organization, the Arab-American Association of New York, was reportedly targeted by the NYPD, spoke angrily of the police department's efforts "to infiltrate [the Association's] board," particularly in light of the efforts she said her organization has made to work with Police Commissioner Ray Kelly. "As we were inviting Commissioner Kelly and his leadership into our mosques, into our institutions, he was coming through the back door," a furious Sarsour lamented.

The president of the Arab American Association of New York, Dr. Ahmad Jaber, said that the discoveries in the AP report made him feel "betrayed" after the work he and others have been doing to try to build a relationship between the NYPD and the Muslim community. Jaber used to be the president of the Dawood Mosque on State Street in Brooklyn, which Sarsour said is the oldest mosque in Brooklyn. The Dawood Mosque was also reportedly designated a terrorist organization and targeted in the NYPD's "terrorism enterprise investigations." The AP reported the NYPD has carried out at least a dozen such investigations since 9/11, many spanning several years, and none resulting in any criminal charges ever being brought against a mosque or organization. Kelly appointed Jaber to a position on the Muslim Advisory Council to the NYPD; today, he announced that he will resign. Jaber said that he had hoped the Police Advisory Council could be effective in mending the relationship between the NYPD and the Muslim community, but that this recent discovery "was the last straw." He urged the others on the council to tender their resignations as well. Jaber and others echoed Sarsour's call for a Department of Justice investigation.

Federal law enforcement sources reportedly told the AP that the NYPD's investigations were so invasive that the FBI, an agency within the Department of Justice, would not consider conducting anything like them. Early this year, the Department of Justice filed a statement of interest in the federal stop-and-frisk trial *Floyd v. City of New York*, in which the plaintiffs accused the NYPD of targeting people of color. Seizing upon the potential that the presiding judge might order independent oversight of the NYPD's stop-and-frisk practice, the DOJ requested the judge consider appointing a federal monitor. Department of Justice oversight over police departments has been carried out in several other cities around the country.

Lamis Deek, a board member at the Council for American-Islamic Relations in New York, angrily questioned the idea that the DOJ may not consider the surveillance of people based on their religion equally discriminatory and unconstitutional to targeting people based on their race. Speaking for her community, many members of which were lined up behind her, Sarsour said: "We are tired of the violation of the civil rights of Muslim New Yorkers." "I am a New Yorker. I am an American," Sarsour said. "I'm running a social service agency that is filling a gap that the government is not filling. I am serving an underserved community in New York City. I deserve to be able to do my job."

The NYPD did not respond to request for comment.

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