



THE NYPD'S DISCRIMINATORY SURVEILLANCE OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

WHO is spying on whom?

- Since at least 2002, the New York City Police Department's Intelligence Division has engaged in the religious profiling and suspicionless surveillance of Muslims in New York City and beyond.
- The NYPD's Intelligence Division has singled out Muslim religious and community leaders, mosques, student associations, organizations, businesses, and individuals for pervasive surveillance that is discriminatory and not conducted against institutions or individuals belonging to any other religious faith, or the public at large.
- The Intelligence Division units engaged in the NYPD's Muslim surveillance program include its Demographics Unit, renamed the Zone Assessment Unit; the Intelligence Analysis Unit; the Cyber Intelligence Unit; and the Terrorist Interdiction Unit.

WHERE has the surveillance taken place?

- The NYPD's suspicionless surveillance program has swept up Muslim communities throughout New York City, as well as every mosque within [100 miles](#) of New York, and [extended](#) to Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New Jersey, and more.

WHY is the NYPD spying on Muslim communities?

- The NYPD's surveillance program is based on a false and unconstitutional premise: that Muslim religious belief and practices are a basis for law enforcement scrutiny.
- The purported rationale for this unconstitutional surveillance is captured in a 2007 NYPD Intelligence Division report titled "Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat." The report claims to identify a "radicalization process" by which individuals turn into terrorists – a "process" so broad that it seems to treat with suspicion anyone who identifies as Muslim, harbors Islamic beliefs, or engages in Islamic religious practices. For example, its purported radicalization "indicators" include First Amendment-protected activities including "wearing traditional Islamic clothing [and] growing a beard," abstaining from alcohol, and "becoming involved in social activism."

HOW is the NYPD spying on Muslim communities?

The NYPD's Intelligence Division uses a variety of methods to spy on and monitor Muslim communities without any suspicion of wrongdoing. They include:

- **Mapping of Muslim Communities:** The NYPD's Demographics Unit (now the Zone Assessment Unit) has mapped neighborhoods predominantly occupied by 28 so-called "[ancestries of interest](#)"—i.e., national origin associated with Muslim populations—as well as "American Black Muslims." The NYPD expressly excluded from its surveillance and mapping activities non-Muslims such as Coptic Christian Egyptians or Iranian Jews.

- **Photo and Video Surveillance:** NYPD officers, stationed in cars outside of mosques, have taken [pictures and video](#) of those leaving and entering places of worship, and recorded the [license plate](#) numbers of worshippers attending services. Remotely controlled NYPD [cameras](#) have also been placed on light poles, aimed at mosques.
- **Police Informants:** The NYPD has recruited so-called “[mosque crawlers](#),” to act as inside observers in mosques. They report on sermons, provide names of attendees, and take pictures inside of the mosques. Employing a method called “[create and capture](#),” the NYPD has instructed informants to “create” conversations about jihad or terrorism and “capture” and report the responses to the police. Informants are often selected from a pool of arrestees, prisoners, or suspects who are pressured into becoming informants.
- **Police “Rakers”:** Teams of NYPD plainclothes officers—called “rakers”—have been deployed to Muslim communities where they can blend in “[consistent with their ethnicity and or language](#).” They aim to compile information on the community, listen in on conversations at Muslim restaurants and businesses, and identify Muslim “hotspots.”
- **Tracking Individuals:** The NYPD tracks people who [changed their names](#), investigating those who could be Muslim converts or who were “Americanizing” their names.
- **Intelligence Databases:** The Intelligence Division has generated daily reports on innocent Muslims’ lives. The names of thousands of innocent New Yorkers have been placed in secret police files. Information is kept both in an intelligence database and on a standalone computer used to generate intelligence reports.

WHAT are the consequences of the NYPD’s spying on Muslim communities?

- **Stigma:** Through its religious profiling and surveillance, the NYPD has imposed an unwarranted badge of suspicion and stigma on law-abiding Muslim New Yorkers.
- **Interference with Religious Practice:** The NYPD’s suspicionless surveillance has forced religious leaders to censor what they say to their congregants, for fear anything they say could be taken out of context by police officers or informants. Some religious leaders feel they must regularly record their sermons to defend themselves against potential NYPD mischaracterizations. Disruptions resulting from unlawful NYPD surveillance have also diverted time and resources away from religious education and counseling. Muslims [have reported](#) feeling pressure to avoid appearing overtly religious, for example, by changing their dress or the length of their beards.
- **Community Fear:** The NYPD’s discriminatory surveillance has produced an atmosphere of [fear and mistrust](#) within mosques and the Muslim community at large. At mosques, congregants often regard newcomers with anxiety, unsure if they are sent to spy by the NYPD. As a result, these houses of worship cannot serve as the places of spiritual refuge and comfort that they are intended to be.
- **Chilling Free Speech:** The NYPD’s discriminatory surveillance has chilled religious speech and political activism—from engagement in public debates and protests, to friendly coffee-house banter.
- **Damaging Law Enforcement Relationships:** The NYPD’s unlawful profiling of Muslims has damaged its relationship with American Muslims, breaching communities’ trust in a police department that is tasked with protecting them.