

Civil Rights, Community Groups Respond to Third NYPD Spying Report

[NEW YORK, NY, 03/01/2021] -- Today, a coalition of community and civil rights organizations responded to the third annual public report on the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) intelligence operations from Stephen Robinson, the Civilian Representative on the NYPD's "Handschu Committee." Mayor de Blasio appointed Robinson as the Civilian Representative in 2017. The position came as part of a series of reforms resulting from community mobilization in reaction to widespread NYPD spying on Muslim communities. The Handschu Guidelines were revised to limit surveillance of religious and political activity. As part of his duties, the Civilian Representative is required to file an annual report on the NYPD's compliance with the Handschu Guidelines. The [third report](#), released to the public last week, covers the period from March 2019 to March 2020.

"Judge Robinson's report demonstrates the necessity of having an independent voice to participate in important decisions that weigh heavily on the rights and lives of Muslims and Muslim communities in New York City," said Marwa Janini, Executive Director of the Arab American Association of NY (AAA-NY). "But there is still room for more: the NYPD Inspector General found in August 2016 that 95 percent of the NYPD's surveillance activities were focused on Muslims. Nothing in the third report from the Civilian Representative three years into his tenure disabuses us of that notion."

"Certain aspects of Judge Robinson's report remain troubling," said Naz Ahmad of the CLEAR project. "His report states that he met with Intelligence Bureau officials regarding the debriefing practices of protestors, but it does not indicate whether anything came out of this meeting, and if he sought and/or received any other information concerning NYPD's activities as it relates to Black-led organizing, particularly around policing."

"Once again, this report fails to provide meaningful information concerning the NYPD's surveillance practices and raises red flags about years long investigations," said Ahmed Mohamed, of CAIR-NY. "It is troubling that the average length of an investigation has doubled from 302 to 605 days from the previous year, suggesting that the NYPD is subjecting individuals or organizations to years long surveillance, particularly when it is unclear whether any charges have been brought. The lack of transparency in the report should concern all New Yorkers."

In 2019, community groups [voiced similar concerns](#), including the issue of the demographics of the targets of these investigations, which remains unaddressed. This pattern of focus on one faith-based group further underlines the dire need for a tireless Civilian Representative.

Given the historic and massive protests last year following the police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others - and the national/local call to defund the police - the undersigned groups are also calling for Judge Robinson's fourth report (expected to cover March 2020 - March 2021) to be released summer 2021, in line with release dates for the first two reports.

Originally ordered by consent decree in 1985, the Handschu Guidelines are the result of a class action lawsuit, *Handschu v. Special Services Division*, which established important limits on NYPD intelligence operations. The new safeguards— including the placement of a Civilian Representative within the Handschu Committee overseeing Intelligence Bureau surveillance of

constitutionally protected religious and political organizing— were introduced into the Guidelines as part of the joint settlement process of an enforcement motion in the Handschu class action and the *Raza v. City of New York* case.

SEE: Report Says NYPD Muslim Surveillance Has Decreased
<https://www.wnyc.org/story/report-says-nypd-muslim-surveillance-has-decreased/>

The coalition includes:

Arab American Association of New York (AAA-NY)
Center for Constitutional Rights
Communities United for Police Reform
Council on American Islamic Relations, New York (CAIR-NY)
Creating Law Enforcement Responsibility and Responsibility project (CLEAR)
DRUM – Desis Rising Up and Moving
Emgage NYC
Jewish Voice for Peace
Muslim Community Network
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (STOP)

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