

Civil Rights, Community Groups Welcome NYPD Spying Report

[NEW YORK, NY, 6/8/2018] -- Today, a coalition of community and civil rights organizations welcomed a report on the New York City Police Department's (NYPD) intelligence operations from Stephen Robinson, the Civilian Representative on the NYPD's "Handschu Committee." Last year, Mayor de Blasio appointed Robinson as the Civilian Representative, implementing reforms resulting from community mobilization in reaction to widespread NYPD spying on Muslim communities. This was Judge Robinson's [first public report](#) on NYPD compliance with the revised Handschu Guidelines, negotiated to settle legal claims in *Raza v. City of New York* and *Handschu v. Special Services Division*, and limiting surveillance of religious and political activity.

"Judge Robinson's report is an important milestone, providing the first detailed, public explanation of how the NYPD internally reviews requests to surveil constitutionally-protected activity," said **AAANY Executive Director Rama Issa**. "The report also showcases Robinson's efforts to protect religious and political activity. In just one year, Judge Robinson helped reduce the average length of NYPD surveillance operations by 87 days. The Handschu Committee, during Judge Robinson's tenure, has delayed or denied almost 4 times as many requests than the previous year. These significant changes demonstrate the necessity and importance 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."

"We are heartened that Judge Robinson takes his role as the Civilian Representative seriously, demanding real evidence before allowing these highly intrusive investigations," said **Tarek Z. Ismail, Senior Staff Attorney at the CLEAR Project at CUNY School of Law**. "For too long, claims of 'connectivity' and 'social media posts' have been used as an excuse to target innocent New Yorkers for the race and faith. We have heard directly from the Judge that this demand for transparency has already exposed some investigation requests as factually insufficient, and we trust he will continue to insist on the accountability described in the report."

"While we appreciate the progress that Judge Robinson has been able to achieve thus far, we remain dismayed about the activities of the Intelligence Bureau, particularly as it relates to American Muslims in our city and beyond," said **CAIR-NY Legal Director Albert Cahn**. "The NYPD Inspector General found in August 2016 that 95 percent of the NYPD's surveillance activities were focused on Muslims. Nothing in today's report from the Civilian Representative's disabuses us of that notion. We believe that this pattern of focus on one faith-based group further underlines the dire need for a tireless Civilian Representative. We do not anticipate that need changing anytime soon, and we are glad Judge Robinson has enthusiastically taken on that mantle. We will continue our engagement with him to make sure our communities' concerns are met."

The coalition includes (listed in alphabetical order):

Arab American Association of New York
Arab American Bar Association (AABA)
Association of Muslim American Lawyers (AMAL)
The Campaign to Take on Hate
CLEAR Project, CUNY School of Law
Communities United for Police Reform
Council on American Islamic Relations, New York (CAIR-NY)
Jews for Racial and Economic Justice
Jewish Voice for Peace – Northern New Jersey
MPOWER Change
Muslim Community Network
Muslim Social Justice Initiative (MSJI)
South Asian Fund For Education, Scholarship and Training (SAFEST)

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. Additional 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: After Spying on Muslims, New York Police Agree to Greater Oversight

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/06/nyregion/nypd-spying-muslims-surveillance-lawsuit.html>

As part of his duties, the Civilian Representative is required to file an annual report on the NYPD's compliance with the Handschu Guidelines. Community and civil rights organizations look forward to continuing to meet on a regular basis with the Civilian Representative.

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