

# How the NYPD Targets Muslims

---

Muslim communities in the New York area have been ethnically and religiously profiled and unconstitutionally surveilled by law enforcement at an astounding rate. A 2016 investigation of NYPD practices by the Office of the Inspector General found that while Muslims make up only about 3% of New York City's population, we were the targets of 95% of the NYPD's surveillance. Since at least 2002, the NYPD's Intelligence Division engaged in the unjustified religious profiling and surveillance of Muslims in New York City and beyond. Their practices included:

- mapping Muslim communities based on "ancestries of interest"
- arranging for photo and video surveillance of mosques and community centers, capturing the license plates and likenesses of attendees
- sending undercover police informants called "crawlers" into houses of worship, schools and universities, social justice organizations and community gatherings
- creating daily reports on the lives of innocent Muslim New Yorkers, thousands of which remain in secret police files, potentially being shared with federal agencies
- failing to comply with Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests regarding surveillance policies, thereby blocking any attempts at transparency

Muslim New Yorkers have also been subject to unjustified surveillance at the federal level, where federal agencies employ the following practices:

- profiling Muslims and other people of color at airports and at US borders based on race or other supposed markers of religiosity
- constructing secret watchlists of hundreds of thousands of "potential terrorists" based on race and/or religion and even surveilling travelers *not* suspected of crime through programs like "Quiet Skies"
- using the federal government's "Countering Violent Extremism" initiative to encourage Muslim Americans to spy on their own community members
- targeting innocent Muslim New Yorkers in efforts to aggressively gather intelligence, though they are not suspects of any crimes

The impact of this surveillance has had tremendous effects. Law enforcement has further stigmatized what is already one of the most marginalized communities in New York City, and in turn has solidified Muslims' suspicion and fear of law enforcement. Imams (religious leaders) record their sermons knowing their words can be taken out of context. Young children hesitate to identify themselves as Muslim. College students are too afraid to research "controversial" subjects or take up leadership roles in their campus communities. Even hate crime victims forgo reporting the crimes committed against them to avoid interfacing with NYPD. Additionally, the stigma of surveillance on the Muslim community has itself bred suspicion and otherization based on faith, national origin, and ethnicity. These actions potentially feed into the 974% increase in anti-Muslim discrimination that CAIR-NY tracked from 2015-2017. This is no different from what CAIR sees at the national level: in 2017 alone, 35% of all anti-Muslim bias incidents stemmed from government agency-instigated episodes—almost double the figure for 2016 and triple that of 2015.