

**New York City Council, Committee on Public Safety
Oversight Hearing on Community Policing in NYC
March 3, 2015**

Testimony submitted by Zeinab Khalil, Arab American Association of New York

My name is Zeinab Khalil. I am the Leader Organizer & Advocacy Trainer at the Arab American Association of New York. I would like to use this platform to discuss some issues the AAANY has been working on in regards to community policing.

For community policing to work, there must be trust between communities and police. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The relationship between the NYPD and Arab American and American Muslim communities has been strained for a long time, especially over the past 14 years.

This in large part has to do with the NYPD's blanket surveillance of Muslim communities. The NYPD must end its unwarranted surveillance programs that breed mistrust and suspicion in our communities, and do nothing to make the public safer. The NYPD should also publicly denounce its "Radicalization in the West" report which draws on negligent methodology and faulty conclusions that are counterproductive to both civil liberties and counterterrorism policy. The report promotes racial and religious profiling by making sweeping generalizations about the process of radicalization. It lists every day practices as grounds for suspect behavior, including wearing visibly Muslim clothing, growing a beard, praying five times a day, and participating in community and political activism. The NYPD should publicly clarify that criminalizing Muslims for their everyday activities is wrong. Doing so would send a strong message that the NYPD views Muslim communities as partners, not suspects.

Finally, the NYC Council needs to understand community policing in a holistic manner. Making communities safer does not come down to only relying on policing. We need to be more nuanced in understanding collective safety. Do communities have adequate services and resources for youth initiatives, recreational programs, resiliency models, and intervention programs? Are we funding and supporting the right organizations? Are we integrating *enough* organizations? I know for a fact from looking at the NYC Council Schedule C, that only a very small number of Muslim organizations are receiving financial support, even though there are over 800,000 Muslim New Yorkers who are by-in-large tax-paying, active members of their communities.

We need to understand public safety beyond handcuffs and guns. Ultimately, we should ask, what do we need to make our communities active, safe and thriving? The answer to that is multi-faceted. It involves investing in excellent education, in robust youth programs, and in community organizations that are already doing the work of violence prevention and civic engagement.