



STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

LETITIA JAMES
ATTORNEY GENERAL

DIVISION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE
CIVIL RIGHTS BUREAU

April 1, 2022

VIA USPS

Steven Emerson
Investigative Project on Terrorism
5614 Connecticut Ave., NW, 341
Washington, DC 20015

CEASE AND DESIST NOTIFICATION

Dear Mr. Emerson:

The New York State Office of the Attorney General (OAG) has reviewed reports alleging that your organization, the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT), used paid informants and infiltrators to spy on Muslim houses of worship, Muslim advocacy groups, and prominent Muslim leaders. You are advised that such conduct could violate the New York Civil Rights Law and other state and federal laws. You are hereby instructed to cease and desist any ongoing or contemplated unlawful espionage operations against Muslims and Muslim organizations within the State of New York. Discrimination has no place in New York. The OAG will use every tool at its disposal to protect Muslim New Yorkers against unlawful intimidation campaigns.

The IPT has reportedly paid spies for over a decade to infiltrate Muslim organizations, record confidential conversations, and forward confidential emails. Public statements from those involved in the operation suggest that IPT targeted these organizations in a concerted effort to hamper Muslims in the exercise of their civil rights, including the right to worship, to peacefully assemble and organize politically, to petition government, and to vote. IPT reportedly infiltrated the Ohio chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), through its longtime leader, Romin Iqbal, who reportedly leaked confidential documents and recordings in possible violation of his fiduciary duties. IPT also reportedly paid more than \$100,000 to Virginia resident Tariq Nelson to record confidential conversations without other participants' knowledge. The reported targets of these espionage operations included at least one house of worship located in New York State.

New York Civil Rights Law § 40-c prohibits discrimination or harassment against an individual exercising their civil rights on the basis of creed, and New York Civil Rights Law § 79-n prohibits intimidating an individual on the basis of their religion or religious practice. The

OAG is authorized to investigate and remediate alleged violations of those laws. *See* N.Y. Civ. Rts. Law §§ 40-d, 79-n(3).

The OAG's mission to protect diverse religious practices includes sparing Muslim religious and civil rights organizations from unlawful infiltration and intimidation. You are therefore instructed to immediately cease and desist from any further discriminatory activities against Muslims in New York State and to comply fully with the requirements of the New York Civil Rights Law and all other applicable state and federal statutes.

Within the next **five business days**, please contact the undersigned to confirm your compliance. Your failure to comply with this directive may result in further action by this office.

Sincerely,

/s/ Rick Sawyer

Rick Sawyer, Special Counsel for Hate Crimes
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State of New York
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