

STOP



SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY OVERSIGHT PROJECT

Organizational Summary:

The Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (“S.T.O.P.”) launched in January 2019 as a novel public interest, advocacy, and legal services organization, addressing state and local officials’ growing use of surveillance technologies. S.T.O.P. is hosted and incubated by the Urban Justice Center’s Social Justice Accelerator.

Anti-surveillance advocacy has largely targeted federal agencies since Edward Snowden’s revelations about U.S. data-collection, frequently ignoring the alarming growth in local and state surveillance. Sadly, while things are bleak at the federal level, they are far worse here in New York State. The NYPD and other police departments purchase the same cutting-edge surveillance tools deployed by the federal government, with a small fraction of the oversight. These systems potentially provide large volumes of information to federal agencies, endangering immigrant New Yorkers, and violating the promise that New York will be a “sanctuary city.”

These tools also harm communities of color, irrespective of immigration status. For years, Muslim New Yorkers have endured unjust and unconstitutional NYPD surveillance. Specifically, the NYPD’s Intelligence Division engaged in extensive warrantless, suspicionless surveillance of Muslim-majority neighborhoods and Muslim families. Similarly, the NYPD’s gang database includes more than 17,000 New Yorkers, overwhelmingly New Yorkers of color, while systematically omitting white supremacist and right-wing nationalist organizations.

S.T.O.P. is headed by Albert Fox Cahn, a public interest lawyer and interfaith advocate most recently of CAIR NY. Mr. Cahn—a graduate of Harvard Law School and former Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP associate—helped to lead CAIR-NY beginning in 2016, at a moment when Muslim New Yorkers faced historic challenges from the Trump administration and surges in hate crimes. Mr. Cahn oversees policy coalitions, develops strategic messaging, has written numerous op-eds, and has appeared in hundreds of interviews with international media outlets.

S.T.O.P.’s Resident Technologist Liz O’Sullivan has spent ten years in tech, most recently as the head of image annotations for the computer vision startup, Clarifai. She oversaw customer delivery, support, sales, and solutions architecture at a variety of firms. Her passion for ethics springs from her Philosophy education at UNC-Chapel Hill.

S.T.O.P. is overseen by a Board of Directors and Community Advisory Board (“CAB”). The CAB includes advocates, activists, attorneys, and technologists from communities historically targeted by warrantless surveillance.

S.T.O.P.’s flagship litigation is a putative federal class action against New York City for forcing Muslim women to remove the hijab. Initial legislative priorities include New York City’s passage of the Public Oversight of Surveillance Technology Act and New York State’s passage of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act.

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