

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-sfba-welcomes-vote-to-end-oakland-city-police-department-partnership-with-fbis-joint-terrorism-task-force/

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

(SANTA CLARA, CA, 10/21/2020) The Council on American-Islamic Relations San Francisco Bay Area chapter (CAIR-SFBA) today welcomed Oakland City Councils unanimous vote late last night to end the Oakland Police Departments (OPD) partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigations Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), a collaboration that has created a culture of surveillance and criminalization for communities of color, especially Black, Arab, Muslim, and immigrant communities.

Since 2007, OPD officers participating in the JTTF have had the same powers as FBI agents, allowing them to surveil and harass community members without probable cause, and target people with mental health, identity, and family issues. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is also a prominent member of the JTTF. In 2017, Oakland passed a transparency ordinance requiring OPD to follow local and state laws when participating in the JTTF and to submit annual reports to the city council on their JTTF activities. However, OPD has consistently violated the transparency ordinance and failed to submit reports to the City Council for oversight on their activities. The City Councils decision to end this partnership is a step in the right direction to reimagining what true public safety can look like for Oakland's communities.

A coalition of more than thirty organizations came together to support this resolution. Representatives from Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus (Asian Law Caucus); the Council on American-Islamic Relations, San Francisco Bay Area chapter (CAIR-SFBA); Secure Justice; and the Yemeni Alliance Committee, issued the following statements:

Sameena Usman, Government Relations Coordinator, CAIR-SFBA, states:

Oakland's City Council voted today to protect our communities from harmful federal law enforcement practices of profiling, surveillance, and targeting of vulnerable groups. We must continue to uphold our city's values and build a stronger community.

Javeria Jamil, Staff Attorney, National Security & Civil Rights, Asian Law Caucus, states:

We are thrilled that the Oakland City Council ended OPD's participation in this task force. JTTFs have terrorized our communities for far too long, targeting peaceful protesters and profiling entire communities based on nothing more than race, religion, and ethnicity. Oakland's communities are safer with this partnership coming to an end.

Jehan Hakim, Executive Director, Yemeni Alliance Committee, states:

The Muslim community has felt the brunt of FBI harassment, racial profiling and systemic Islamophobia on a global scale for decades today, Oakland's Muslim community feels seen and heard by elected officials. We are pleased that the partnership between the JTTF and the City of Oakland is once and for all terminated. This is a step in the right direction towards putting public safety first. Thank you Oakland for standing up for some of your most marginalized communities.

Brian Hofer, Chair of the Privacy Advisory Commission, states:

Racial and religious profiling, civil asset forfeiture without a conviction, and surveillance conducted on innocent people not suspected of any wrongdoing are not Oakland values. Such practices do not make us safe, and the chilling effect caused by such actions makes us less safe. We are grateful to President Kaplan and the Oakland City Council for standing up for their constituents and defending Oakland's values.

CAIR-SFBA is an office of CAIR, America's largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance understanding of Islam, protect civil rights, promote justice and empower American Muslims.

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