Dear Attorney General Chiesa:

The undersigned civil rights, faith-based, student and civic groups write to you regarding the New York Police Department’s (“NYPD”) violations of the civil rights of law-abiding New Jerseyans (as well as residents of New York, Connecticut, and Pennsylvania) who have been the targets of massive, abusive surveillance practices based on their ethnic or faith background, and the NYPD’s false and misleading statements about these discriminatory policing activities. The seriousness of this problem cannot be overstated, and we urgently request that you conduct a prompt investigation into this matter.¹

On February 2, 2012, the Associated Press (“AP”) reported that the NYPD recommended increasing surveillance of thousands of Shi’a Muslims and their mosques, based solely on their religion without any evidence of wrongdoing taking place in those institutions.² The list included six Shi’a mosques, community centers, and organizations in New Jersey along with a dozen others in New York, central Connecticut, and the Philadelphia suburbs. Shortly thereafter, on February 18, the AP reported that the NYPD monitored Muslim college students at more than a dozen schools far beyond the New York City and state limits, including at the Newark and New Brunswick campuses of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.³ Alarming, on February 22, the AP reported that Americans living and working in Newark, New Jersey, were subjected to surveillance as part of the NYPD’s effort to build databases of where Muslims work, shop, and pray, culminating in a 60-page report with photographs and details of legitimate businesses and more than a dozen houses of worship.⁴

¹ The Attorney General is statutorily responsible for the enforcement of civil rights laws of the U.S. and of the State of New Jersey, pursuant to the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination, N.J. STAT. ANN. § 10-5:1–10-5:42.
Unfortunately, this is not the first report of the NYPD engaging in a pattern of blanket suspicion towards the American Muslim community based on race, ethnicity, or religious beliefs and practices. In August 2011, the AP began publishing a series of investigative reports about the NYPD’s intelligence gathering program specifically targeting the American Muslim community, and the CIA’s involvement in this program.\textsuperscript{5} The NYPD was exposed as targeting the entire Muslim community—and approximately 250 mosques, schools, and businesses—without any evidence of wrongdoing.\textsuperscript{6} AP reports indicate that, as part of ethnic mapping programs throughout the city, the NYPD targets Muslim neighborhoods, maintains a list of “ancestries of interest,” and receives daily reports from informants who visit cafes and clubs to collect information about Muslim patrons.\textsuperscript{7}

NYPD surveillance of New Jersey residents is especially troubling because of recent revelations regarding offensive trainings New York police officers received from their department. Last year, for example, it was reported that \textit{The Third Jihad}, a film containing inaccurate and inflammatory depictions of Islam and Muslims seeking world domination, was being shown to NYPD officers.\textsuperscript{8} In response, the NYPD assured the public that the film had only been shown “a few times” to some officers.\textsuperscript{9} This claim was recently revealed to be false when newly released documents showed that the film was played for three months, viewed by almost 1,500 officers, and even more troubling, that its producers conducted a ninety-minute interview with NYPD Commissioner Ray Kelly.\textsuperscript{10} The NYPD’s continuous false and misleading statements about its role in the production and dissemination of the film and its use of a patently bigoted film that paints the entire American Muslim community as a national security threat are not only insulting to millions of Americans, but also appears to be a misguided effort to train officers that using religion as a proxy for criminal activity is permissible.

The above-described measures uncover a disturbing picture about the NYPD’s institutional approach to American Muslim, Arab, South Asian, Iranian, and Middle Eastern communities. Furthermore, such measures are the newest manifestation of the NYPD’s well-documented discriminatory practices against other communities of color. The State of New Jersey has taken great strides in addressing and correcting a past

\textsuperscript{6} Associated Press’ reporting on NYPD Intelligence Operations, \textit{available at:} \url{http://www.ap.org/nypd/}.
\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Id.}
history of inappropriate profiling by law enforcement through training and strategic partnerships to make our state safe for people of all backgrounds. Now, as evidenced by these reports, outside actors are freely engaging in racial and religious profiling and unwarranted surveillance of New Jersey residents without any accountability or oversight.

The actions of the NYPD are inconsistent with the values of the State of New Jersey. Reiterating the calls from numerous officials including Governor Chris Christie, Newark Mayor Cory Booker, and Rutgers President Richard McCormick, we respectfully request that your office undertakes an immediate investigation into the practices outlined above. We ask that, in addition to a general investigation into the NYPD actions described above, you also investigate (1) the extent to which any New Jersey police department assisted in such activities and (2) whether the NYPD broke any New Jersey laws, such as the Wiretapping Act, in conducting its surveillance and its targeting of a segment of New Jersey citizens. Finally, if guidelines do not already exist, we request that you promulgate guidelines to delineate whether, or in what circumstances, a local police department should assist an outside jurisdiction in activities conducted in New Jersey, other than those related to a specific criminal investigation.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and continue to look forward to your response. We would appreciate it if you would acknowledge receipt of this letter and convey any other communications through our coalition representative, Sakina Rizvi, at sakinarizviimi@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Ahlul-Bayt Student Association at Rutgers University (ABSA)
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
American Arab Forum
American Civil Liberties Union of New Jersey (ACLU-NJ)
Arab American Association of New York (AAANY)
Arab Muslim American Federation
Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund (AALDEF)
Association of Muslim American Lawyers (AMAL)
Campaign for Peace and Democracy (CPD)
Council on American-Islamic Relations – New Jersey (CAIR-NJ)
Council on American-Islamic Relations – New York (CAIR-NY)
DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving
Imam-a-Zamana Foundation of North America (IZFNA)
Imamia Medics International
Independent Viewpoints
Islamic Center of Morris County (ICMC)
Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)
Islamic Information Center (IIC)
Majlis Al-Shura of New York
Muslim Advocates
Muslim American Civil Liberties Coalition (MACLC)
Muslim American Association (MAS)
Muslim Bar Association of New York (MuBANY)
Muslim Center of Middlesex County (MCMC)
Muslim Consultative Network (MCN)
Muslims for Peace, Inc.
Muslim Foundation Inc. (MFI)
Muslim Progressive Traditionalist Alliance
National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)
New Jersey Muslim Lawyers Association
New Jersey Peace Action
SAALT
Shia Association of North America (SANA)
Sikh Coalition
Universal Muslim Association of America (UMAA)
WESPAC Foundation