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## **U.S. Department of Justice Denies Public Access to Guidelines on FBI Surveillance of Mosques & Communities**

*Muslim Advocates files suit in federal court to protect religious freedom*

(SAN FRANCISCO) **September 16, 2009**—While Federal Bureau of Investigation Director Robert Mueller testified today before the Senate Judiciary Committee, [Muslim Advocates](#)—a national legal advocacy and educational organization—filed suit in federal court in Washington, DC demanding access to surveillance guidelines issued by the FBI to its agents. In the wake of concerns over federal agents infiltrating mosques and the so-called “mapping” of communities where American Muslim reside, the suit against the Department of Justice asserts that the FBI has no legal basis to withhold the Domestic Investigative Operational Guidelines, which became effective in December 2008.

“All Americans have the right to attend religious services without fear of law enforcement agents looking over their shoulder while they pray,” said Muslim Advocates Executive Director Farhana Khara, “The public—and especially the American Muslim community, which has been under tremendous scrutiny since 9/11—has a substantial interest in the release of the complete and unredacted guidelines.”

The suit, which was filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, demands the immediate and full disclosure of the standards and procedures utilized by FBI agents when initiating surveillance activities in houses of worship and online social networking forums, and when cultivating agent provocateurs.

A copy of the draft DIOGs were shared with Muslim Advocates and other privacy, civil liberties and community organizations in November 2008 during a meeting with the FBI. The FBI, however, required attendees to return the DIOGs at the completion of the meeting. This suit was filed after months of unsuccessful requests by Muslim Advocates attorneys through the Freedom of Information Act to obtain an unredacted copy of the final guidelines.

Muslim Advocates’ legal action mirrors a similar suit filed by the [Electronic Frontier Foundation](#) on June 24.

*Muslim Advocates (www.muslimadvocates.org) is a national legal advocacy and educational organization dedicated to promoting freedom, justice and equality for all, regardless of faith, by providing leadership through legal advocacy, policy engagement, and civic education, and by serving as a legal resource to promote the full and meaningful participation of Muslims in American public life.*