5 October 2011

**Press Statement**

*In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.*

Sheikh Reda Shata expresses shock and dismay at reports that he was the subject of a secret investigation and undercover surveillance by the New York Police Department’s intelligence squad.

The news of the investigation, which Sheikh Shata has learned about only this week, comes as a shock to the Imam, especially considering the serious nature of the purported accusations that were the basis for the reported investigation.

Sheikh Shata, while reiterating his often-stated condemnation of terrorism, incitement and prejudice, and noting that he has long considered himself a partner with federal and local law enforcement authorities in the mutual efforts to maintain security and foster strong community relations in New York City, expresses deep regret that he was the subject of such suspicion by the same authorities. He considers such surveillance operations that are based on unfounded suspicion and religious profiling as prejudiced and unnecessary not to mention a mismanagement of dearly-needed counter-terrorism resources. He however has unwavering confidence that the rule of law in this country is the ultimate guarantee against discriminating treatment of any of its citizens.

While regretting being profiled and targeted, apparently for no reason other than his religious affiliation, the Sheikh has no regrets about the cooperation he has always extended to various law enforcement agencies. He vows to continue to go out of his way to maintain all necessary communication and cooperation to facilitate their duties in service of the local community, in order to fulfill his religious obligations as a Muslim, his duties as a United States citizen, and his additional responsibility as a prominent community figure.

Sheikh Shata underscores that the reported extensive investigation and surveillance which has unfairly targeted Muslim Imams and Mosques in New York City has only served to prove that the Muslim American community is a patriotic component of this nation and that any attempts to imply that Muslims are more likely to support terrorism are completely unfounded.

Sheikh Shata thanks God for helping him serve his community and society, and delivering him from such misguided suspicion. He also appreciates the high professionalism of the investigative reporters whose keen pursuit of the truth has contributed to uncover this story, and the fine law enforcement officers who carry out their duties in an impartial and professional manner.

He takes this opportunity to reiterate his condemnation of Islamophobia and his calls for an end to all forms of racial and religious profiling and prejudice against Muslims in the United States, and for the upholding of this country’s great values of religious freedom, equality and tolerance.

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