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CAIR-LA Welcomes LA Sheriff's Dept Probe into Officer Misconduct

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ANAHEIM, Calif., Oct. 22 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- The Greater Los Angeles Area office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-LA) today thanked the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department for launching an investigation into allegedly manipulative tactics employed by detectives to pressure a local Muslim to become an informant.

In the past year, several sheriff's deputies raided the home and the business of the Riverside Muslim of Palestinian heritage several times.

According to a complaint letter sent to the sheriff's department by CAIR-LA Staff Attorney and Deputy Executive Director Ameena Qazi last month, the man was arrested and asked whether he considered himself "a good or bad Muslim, the number of times he prays a day, what mosque he goes to, and who the imam of the mosque is."

After being jailed, the man was questioned by agents from "Homeland Security" about the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the war in Iraq and President Obama.

During another raid on the Cerritos home of the man's mother, deputies entered with guns drawn and handcuffed family members, the youngest of whom was 15 years old. Deputies asked questions "about the number of times they pray each day and the mosque they attend," the complaint stated.

When the man's mother was handcuffed, his brother objected and was allegedly kicked to the side by an officer. The man was again arrested and was questioned about "sleeper cells" and his acquaintances, and told if he provided detectives with information, they would make his problems with law enforcement "go away."

In yet another raid on the man's Riverside home, his wife was handcuffed and threatened with arrest, and she was placed in a police vehicle while her two toddlers were left inside the home with the officers. She too was also asked about her religious practices, and when she explained that she delayed in opening the door for the officers in order to cover herself with her hijab, or Islamic headscarf, she was told "we come before your religion."

CAIR-LA representatives arrived at the man's home during the raid and asked to see search warrants and to monitor the situation.

Today the man's defense attorney filed a motion with the Riverside Superior Court claiming discriminatory prosecution. The man currently faces charges of five felony counts and two misdemeanor counts for sale of or possession with intent to sell counterfeit merchandise with two enhancements, and has pleaded not guilty to all counts. CAIR-LA is calling for the due process and civil rights of the man to be upheld.

"We are appalled by the apparent underlying reasons for the investigation, and by the egregious conduct that took place during the course of the investigation," Qazi said. "We are glad the sheriff's department is looking into this matter, and hope that the questions regarding the conduct and whether the charges are discriminatory and vindictive in nature are addressed."

A few weeks ago, CAIR-San Francisco Bay Area office sought answers from the FBI after a tracking device was discovered under a Muslim student's car during a routine oil change.

SEE: CAIR: FBI Tracking of Calif. Muslim Student 'Outrageous'

<http://tinyurl.com/24xosjc>

Also late last month, CAIR-LA renewed call for a probe into the FBI's 'coercive' tactics after charges were dropped against a Tustin man unfairly targeted by the FBI.

SEE: Feds to Drop Charges against Muslim Man Unfairly Targeted by the FBI

<http://tinyurl.com/2d6c35g>

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