



*The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.*



### **CRCL Operations During COVID-19 Response**

Per guidance from the [U.S. Office of Personnel Management](#) in response to COVID-19, CRCL is operating under telework flexibilities while continuing to serve and support the public. As a result, mail operations may be impacted and our response to mailed letters may be delayed. If you wish to file a complaint, the best method of submission at this time is via email to: [CRCLCompliance@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:CRCLCompliance@hq.dhs.gov). CRCL staff will continue to monitor this email address, and our toll-free hotline for your questions at: 1-866-644-8360, TTY: 1-866-644-8361. For additional details on how to file a civil rights complaint, visit: <https://www.dhs.gov/file-civil-rights-complaint>.

### **CRCL Activates ICCT Following Hostage Incident at Congregation Beth Isreal in Texas**

On January 18, 2022, CRCL activated the Incident Community Coordination Team (ICCT) national conference call in response to the January 15, 2022 hostage incident at the Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas. CRCL’s ICCT offers rapid two-way communication between the Federal Government and impacted communities in the aftermath of a homeland security incident or emergency. The ICCT national call provides timely information to communities and allows them to provide feedback to senior government officials.

More than 1,400 participants joined the call, where several leaders from DHS and across the federal interagency provided remarks, offered information and resources available to protect communities, and took questions from callers. CRCL Officer Culliton-González welcomed callers and acknowledged that the hostage event will have lasting and far-reaching effects. She recognized the many challenges that faith-based communities face as they confront crimes of violence, noting that DHS and our government partners at all levels are continually working with our community leaders to keep houses of worship and communities safe. She then welcomed DHS Deputy Secretary John Tien who stated that DHS must ensure we not only protect houses of worship but also focus on partnering, educating, and empowering communities to prevent and respond to such acts of violence.

Other senior government officials provided information about their offices and discussed current initiatives underway to help protect faith-based communities and houses of worship. Speakers included: DHS Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis and Coordinator for Counterterrorism, John Cohen; U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights Kristen Clarke; Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Acting Assistant Administrator Chris Logan; DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) Regional Director Harvey Perriott; DOJ

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Community Relations Service Deputy Director Gerri Ratliff; DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships Director John Picarelli; Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Deputy Director Paul Abbate and FBI Criminal Investigative Division Acting Assistant Director, Jay Greenberg; and White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships Executive Director, Melissa Rogers. The call also featured multiple leaders from community advocacy and faith-based organizations who provided brief remarks. Following questions from participants, CRCL concluded the call and stated that information including resources and contacts will be distributed to participants.

### **DHS Announces Commitment to Enhance Protections for Stateless Individuals in the U.S.**

On December 15, 2021 DHS announced its commitment to adopt a definition of statelessness for immigration purposes and enhance protections for stateless individuals living in the United States. Through the adoption of a standardized definition of statelessness, the Department will ensure it can recognize unique barriers encountered by stateless persons and better identify and protect such individuals.

“Statelessness presents significant humanitarian concerns that require a careful and thoughtful response specifically tailored to the distinct and diverse needs of stateless persons,” **said Secretary Mayorkas**. “DHS is committed to pursuing initiatives to enhance recognition of, and protections for, vulnerable populations, including stateless individuals within the United States.”

DHS recognizes that a significant number of stateless individuals reside in the United States and that such individuals face an assortment of serious challenges and obstacles, such as a lack of identity documents. The actions announced today will reduce barriers to accessing legal immigration status and associated benefits.

As an initial step, DHS will adopt a definition of statelessness for immigration purposes and build a process for making statelessness determinations. In coordination with the Department of State, DHS will work to identify and catalogue barriers to legally available immigration relief and benefits faced by stateless persons. DHS will explore possible avenues to reduce or eliminate such barriers. DHS also commits to establishing a process to increase the data available on stateless persons in the United States and will examine the means through which DHS could facilitate work and travel for stateless persons. *Read the [full release](#) for more details.*

### **CRCL Participates in Intelligence Community’s Civil Liberties and Privacy Summit**

In January 2022, CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González, Deputy Officer Peter Mina, and CRCL staff participated in the Intelligence Community’s (IC) Civil Liberties and Privacy Summit, hosted by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The virtual summit was designed to address current and future trends, challenges, and best practices in protecting privacy and civil liberties in the intelligence space.

CRCL Officer Culliton-González spoke on a panel with fellow DHS privacy and policy senior officials on the intersection of social media, domestic terrorism, and free expression. The discussion focused on the evolution of terrorism-related threats to the U.S. through online and social media platforms, and the Department’s efforts to protect civil rights and privacy considerations while using social media to monitor for these potential threats. Panelists also discussed what changes have been observed in the online threat environment, and certain technologies and collection efforts that agencies should employ when monitoring. Officer Culliton-González further shared the formal principles that CRCL developed to guide recommended practices in writing DHS intelligence and analysis products, and for evaluating raw reporting and other related activities.

CRCL Deputy Officer Peter Mina also moderated a panel on strengthening partner engagement within the intelligence community. The discussion centered on best practices and lessons learned in engaging a wide range of stakeholders to build trust, solicit feedback on prospective policies, and educate the public regarding IC initiatives and activities.

## **CRCL Hosts Community Engagement Roundtables Across the Country**

In the past two months, CRCL conducted several virtual engagement events with community stakeholders across the country. CRCL's Community Engagement Section leads efforts to engage with diverse American communities in more than 18 major cities to hear community concerns regarding DHS programs and policies, share information on the Department's priorities, and provide information on avenues for redress and complaints.

**Atlanta:** CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González hosted a virtual roundtable with diverse Atlanta-area stakeholders. More than 20 local community leaders joined the meeting, along with representatives from several DHS entities including: Transportation Security Administration (TSA), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), FEMA, CISA, and the DHS Office of Immigration Detention Ombudsman (ODIO). Officer Culliton-González shared information about CRCL's role in implementing the Administration's goals on combatting discrimination on the bases of gender identity and sexual orientation and condemning racism and xenophobia. She also discussed the Department's work involving Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE), a serious concern of many communities around the country. Community leaders then raised a number of issues and questions involving local law enforcement activities, delays in processing citizenship applications, and DHS non-profit security grants, among others. CRCL and ODIO also hosted a meeting with area stakeholders on concerns specifically related to immigration detention. The ODIO Acting Ombudsmen provided a detailed overview of the mission and work of ODIO, and participants raised issues involving deportation, certain detention centers and facilities, and the status of civil rights complaints filed with CRCL.

**Seattle:** CRCL hosted a virtual community roundtable with more than 40 Seattle-based stakeholders. CRCL was joined by U.S. Attorney Nicholas Brown, local law enforcement, staff from the offices of Senator Murray and Congresswoman DelBene and Schrier, as well as leaders from several DHS offices and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Community stakeholders asked questions and raised concerns with federal oversight of local law enforcement training/policies, hate crimes reporting and investigations, the status of complaints submitted to CRCL, and vaccinations provided to detainees, among others.

**Minneapolis:** CRCL hosted a virtual roundtable in Minneapolis where CRCL Officer Culliton-González welcomed more than 35 local community stakeholders, along with representatives from the White House Domestic Policy Council, leaders from local law enforcement, and the local FBI Special Agent in Charge. The meeting focused on efforts to curb gun violence and gun trafficking in the Twin Cities and the on-the-ground challenges law enforcement are facing in these efforts.

Most recently, CRCL hosted a virtual roundtable meeting with more than 50 diverse stakeholders in the Chicago-area where discussion included resources on protecting places of worship, due process concerns at Illinois detention facilities, and worksite enforcement priorities. CRCL will continue to engage with diverse stakeholders across the country and work with government and nongovernment partners to address community concerns.

## **CRCL Hosts Listening Session with Community Stakeholders in Metropolitan Detroit**

In December 2021, CRCL Officer Katherine Culliton-González and Chief of Staff Brenda Abdelall hosted a virtual listening session with stakeholders in Dearborn, Michigan. Attendees included leaders and advocates representing Arab and Muslim communities, Michigan Senator Gary Peters, and TSA representatives. During the discussion, community leaders raised multiple concerns regarding travel and screening policies and the impacts on local community members. Officer Culliton-González shared information about the Department's substantive work through the Racial Equity Task Force, a Department-wide effort to ensure DHS programs, policies, and expenditures advance racial equity, support underserved communities, and are free of illegal discrimination on the basis of gender identity or sexual orientation, as outlined in President Biden's Executive Order 13985. She also shared information about CRCL's role as an oversight entity that investigates civil rights and civil liberties complaints filed by the public regarding Department policies or activities. The Officer is committed to sharing the community's concerns with DHS leadership, including DHS Secretary Mayorkas.

## **Operation Allies Welcome: Resettlement of Final Afghan Nationals Across the Country**

Since November 2021, Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) has resettled groups of Afghan nationals at five of eight Department of Defense (DOD) installations, known as “safe havens,” that were established to temporarily house vulnerable Afghans, including those who are Special Immigrant Visa applicants. Afghan individuals have departed safe havens located at Fort Lee and Quantico, Virginia; Fort Bliss, Texas; Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico; and Camp Atterbury, Indiana. To date, more than 66,000 Afghan evacuees have been resettled in communities across the country. These resettlement efforts are led by the Department of State in close coordination with more than 290 local resettlement affiliates.

DOD continues to provide temporary housing facilities for the remaining approximately 9,000 vulnerable Afghans who are in the process of completing their resettlement while at the following five military installations: Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey; Fort Pickett, Virginia; and Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. While on these installations, Afghan evacuees have access to a range of services, including medical care and resettlement services, and they can apply for work authorization.

As of January 27, the U.S. has welcomed more than 76,000 Afghans to the United States through Operation Allies Welcome, providing them with support and assistance as they begin their new lives in America – and we are prepared to welcome additional qualifying Afghans over the coming weeks and months. Prior to entering the United States, Afghan evacuees must successfully complete a rigorous, multi-layered screening and vetting process that includes biometric and biographic screenings conducted by intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism professionals from multiple federal agencies. Afghan evacuees also receive critical vaccinations – which include measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR), varicella, polio, COVID-19, and others – as a condition of their humanitarian parole. All OAW arrivals are tested for COVID-19.

Those who are interested in supporting the resettlement of vulnerable Afghans can go to [www.welcome.us](http://www.welcome.us) to learn more about how to get involved. [Welcome.US](http://Welcome.US) is a national non-profit initiative to welcome and support Afghan nationals as they rebuild their lives in communities across America. Groups of individuals and community organizations can also apply to form a sponsor circle to directly support arriving Afghan evacuees. For more information on the Sponsor Circle Program and to learn how to apply to form a sponsor circle, visit [www.sponsorcircles.org](http://www.sponsorcircles.org).

### **January is National Human Trafficking Prevention Month**

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Every year, millions of men, women, and children are trafficked worldwide—including right here in the United States. It can happen in any community and victims can be any age, race, gender, or nationality. Traffickers might use violence, manipulations, or false promises of well-paying jobs or romantic relationships to lure victims into trafficking situations.

The [DHS Blue Campaign](#) provides [training](#) and [resources](#) to recognize the signs to identify victims and combat human trafficking. Visit [dhs.gov/blue-campaign](https://dhs.gov/blue-campaign) for more information. To report human trafficking to DHS law enforcement, contact 1-866-347-2423. Read more about DHS’ work on human trafficking and forced labor: [DHS Center for Countering Human Trafficking](#).

### **CRCL on the Road**

\*Following continued guidance from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) to exercise social distancing, our Community Engagement team will continue to carry out our mission using various virtual and telephonic tools during this national public health emergency. While our team maintains constant communication with federal, state, local, and civil society stakeholders across the country, we encourage anyone who needs to contact us to do so via email to: [CommunityEngagement@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:CommunityEngagement@hq.dhs.gov). Thank you for your flexibility and understanding during this time.

## **Additional information, and contacting us**

The goal of this periodic newsletter is to inform members of the public about the activities of the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, including: how to file complaints; ongoing and upcoming projects; opportunities to offer comments and feedback; etc. We distribute our newsletters via our stakeholder email list and make them available to community groups for redistribution. Issues of the newsletter can be accessed online at: [www.dhs.gov/crcl-newsletter](http://www.dhs.gov/crcl-newsletter).

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email, want to request back issues, or have other comments or questions, please let us know by emailing [crcloutreach@dhs.gov](mailto:crcloutreach@dhs.gov). For more information, including how to make a civil rights or civil liberties complaint about DHS activities, visit: [www.dhs.gov/crcl](http://www.dhs.gov/crcl).

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