

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Faith-Based Security Advisory Council Meeting
Thursday, October 6th, 2022
Meeting Minutes
10:30 AM – 11:30 AM EST

The open session of the Faith-Based Security Advisory Council (FBSAC) meeting was convened on October 6, 2022, from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. The meeting was open to members of the public under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), P.L. 92-463 and 5 U.S.C. § 552b.

The following individuals attended the meeting:

FBSAC Members

Kiran Kaur Gill (Chair)
Rabbi Julie Schonfeld (Vice Chair)
Chandru Acharya
Imam Mohamed Hagmagid Ali
Salam Al-Marayati
Kimberly Burgo
Rev. Jeffery Cooper
Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune
Rabbi Moshe Hauer
Commissioner Kenneth Hodder
Hyepin Im
Curtis E. Jones
Alberto Martinez
Michael Masters
Sheriff Garry McFadden
Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner
Todd Richins
Mayya Saab
Rev. Gabriel Salguero
Chief Issa Shahin
Imam Talib Shareef
Rev. Al Sharpton
Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart
April Wood

DHS Participants

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas
Brenda Abdelall, Assistant Secretary, Office of Partnership and Engagement
Sameer Hossain, Executive Director, FBSAC
Nicole Rosich, Deputy Executive Director, FBSAC
Mike Miron, Committee Management Officer

Sameer Hossain: For the visibility of everyone on this call, this meeting will be recorded but will not be disseminated. My name is Sameer Hossain, and I serve as the director of Community Engagement in the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Partnership and Engagement. I will be facilitating today's meeting of the Faith-Based Security Advisory Council, or FBSAC for short.

I want to thank the FBSAC members, members of the public, and our government colleagues for joining today's public meeting. We are pleased and honored to be joined by the Secretary of Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas, and we are recording today's webinar for the public record, as mentioned.

As way of background, the FBSAC is a federal advisory committee at the Department of Homeland Security, which provides advice to the Secretary through the Assistant Secretary for Partnership and Engagement, who also serves as the DHS Faith-Based Organizations Security Coordinator on security and preparedness matters related to places of worship, faith communities, and faith-based organizations. The FBSAC serves strictly as an advisory body with the purpose of providing advice upon the request of the Secretary

Under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, or FACA, these meetings are open to the public. Executive summary and meeting minutes will be posted on the DHS FBSAC website and the public FACA database within ninety days of today's meeting. For more details on how to access that, you're welcome to email FBSAC@hq.dhs.gov.

During this meeting today, members of the public are participating in a webinar as attendees. Accordingly, members of the public have the access to see and hear the meeting, but their video cameras and microphones will remain inactive for the duration of today's meeting.

It's my pleasure to now introduce the Department of Homeland Security's Assistant Secretary for Partnership and Engagement, Brenda Abdelall, who will share her opening remarks, and then introduce the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, Alejandro Mayorkas. Now over to you, Assistant Secretary Abdelall.

Assistant Secretary Brenda Abdelall: Good morning, everyone. I'm so incredibly proud to see all of you here today, and to welcome you all to the historic first convening of the DHS Faith-Based Security Advisory Council. I'm really grateful for the work of my team at the Office of Partnership and Engagement for their tireless work in bringing this vision to reality, and to have this esteemed group of leaders, nationwide, to advise the Department and the Secretary of Homeland Security.

Before I introduce the Secretary, I would also like to introduce my role as the Faith-Based Organizations Security Coordinator for the Department. This role seeks to coordinate the Department's outreach efforts with faith-based organizations and related stakeholders on safety and security matters.

We work closely across the department with our office of policy, our cybersecurity and infrastructure security agency (CISA), our office of intelligence and analysis, and our DHS

Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships on this at FEMA to ensure that faith communities nationwide have the resources and threat assessments you need to keep communities safe as they exercise their First Amendment Right.

I have been honored to work under the leadership of Secretary Mayorkas for over a year now, and he has taken a keen interest in uplifting the voices of communities nationwide to ensure their safety and security. I'm honored to turn the floor over to him, thank you.

Secretary Mayorkas: Thank you so much, Brenda, the honor and joy is mine to work with you. I want to thank all of you for your time this morning, and really thank you for your willingness to serve on this Faith-Based Security Advisory Council and advise me and this Department with respect to a shared mission of keeping our faith-based communities safe and helping to keep our entire nation safe and secure.

For those of you who celebrate the Jewish New Year, I want to wish you all a very sweet and healthy New Year, and for those of you who do not celebrate the high holidays, I continue to wish you a sweet and healthy New Year.

This Council really has a tremendous opportunity and a responsibility to help us keep places of worship and related institutions and locations safe, and secure places of worship of all denominations, and we are very eager to hear your thoughts and to receive your recommendations with respect to how we can best achieve that critical objective which is founded on a core principle in our country of freedom of religion and freedom of worship.

There is also a broader arena, in which we hope to receive your recommendations and your sage advice, with respect to our Department, a Department of partnerships with the communities we serve. You as leaders throughout this country can play such a pivotal role in our understanding of the challenges that we face in achieving that close partnership and overcoming those challenges. How we address issues of trust of DHS in the communities that we serve. How we ensure that our reach to the communities is equitable and fair, that we are as accessible to the otherwise disenfranchised, as we are accessible to those of privilege. How we can best serve the communities.

I really want this Council, all of you in your positions of responsibility and leadership, to guide us, advise us, and push us to do things that will build, strengthen, and ensure that the partnership with all communities we serve is an enduring one.

I'm eternally grateful for your willingness to serve on this Council to tackle some very difficult issues. We will not shrink from the difficulty of those issues, but rather embrace them and take them on. This is all about making our relationship and the relationship between this Department and the communities we serve stronger, and that's going to take some work, and that's the work that we want to do, together with all of you. And we're incredibly grateful and privileged that you're willing to do it with us. Thank you.

Sameer Hossain: Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary, for sharing your vision for the Council, just in terms of the next steps for our meeting: we will hear from the Chair of the FBSAC, the Vice

Chair, and then we will open the floor for some brief comments from the other members, so that you can hear from them about the Secretary's vision. We will then administer the oath of office.

I'd like to recognize Ms. Kiran Gill, the Chair of the FBSAC, for her remarks.

Kiran Kaur Gill: Thank you so much, Sameer, and thank you to Secretary Mayorkas, for your remarks and for your important message about building trust and partnership. Good morning, everyone. My name is Kiran Kaur Gill and I am the Executive Director of the Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund. We are a National Sikh American Advocacy Group, based in Washington, DC. I'm humbled and honored to be appointed Chair of this Council.

This work is difficult but necessary. We have seen an increasing number of attacks on our houses of worship. It's important that we find ways to secure our sacred places without compromising fundamental tenets of our faith. We all work together through this inherent tension as we strive to be open and loving to all. I was previously part of the subcommittee for the prevention of targeted violence against faith-based communities. We traveled across the country to hear from survivors of targeted faith-based violence.

We know there is a lot of work to be done to get resources and support out to communities across the country who desperately need it. And I echo the Secretary's sentiment that there needs to be trust and partnership built across these communities, particularly for marginalized communities and communities that have less access to these resources.

This past summer, I was part of a group that helped organize the 10th anniversary remembrance event at the Sikh temple of Oak Creek, Wisconsin. The purpose of the event was to honor the lives lost in this horrific tragedy, and to come together to heal and to move forward. We heard from family members of victims, and there is still so much pain. These communities need our ongoing support.

We also saw the broader community, including a strong and vibrant interfaith community, come together in solidarity. Over the years the Oak Creek community has strengthened its relationships among faith groups, law enforcement, and the FBI to identify threats and community concerns. Genuine and deep relationships have been developed. There is still so much work to be done, but there is a way forward. I'm honored to serve on this Council with esteemed colleagues from different faith and security backgrounds.

There's a tremendous amount of work ahead, but I know we are up to the task. I really appreciate this opportunity once again. Thank you.

Sameer Hossain: Thank you so much, Ms. Gill. I would now like to recognize Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, the Vice Chair of the FBSAC.

Rabbi Julie Schonfeld: Thank you, Sameer. Thank you so much, Secretary Mayorkas and Chairperson Gill. Thank you for this incredibly important charge, which I think is something that unites all of us as faith and community leaders. As I was listening to your words, I hear it through sort of three points of view.

One is as the CEO Emerita of a large networked denomination working around the world. The second is thinking about the experiences that I have been privileged to enjoy working with the various faith and partnership offices of the Executive Branch. Having served on President Obama's Faith Council, where we were addressing some of the most vulnerable people on questions of human trafficking, and also, over the years working with a number of the faith and partnership offices, especially in the last two years in HHS, and being able to take advantage for the faith community of the kinds of programs that were being offered. The last and perhaps the most important way of hearing this charge is that over the last few years I've taken upon myself some retraining and upskilling: becoming a certified information privacy professional and also getting a Master's in Public Health in social determinants of health.

The reason I mention that is because, as I'm listening, I'm so aware of the tremendous amount of work that the Federal government, especially the Executive Branch did in the last few years to reach out to faith leaders and faith communities as trusted messengers. And even though the work in terms of what we're doing here in terms of ensuring the safety and security of the community, and the work in terms of ensuring the health of the community are two somewhat different endeavors, I'm very aware that the end users and the audience are really the same people: it's the people in these communities in which so much was invested, in addition to all that's been invested over the years by this Department and others. So much was invested, so much was gained in terms of working together and developing and strengthening relationships.

I'm very eager to see how we can build upon not only the 2019 report, and all the reports that came before it, but the important ways that the community has changed and grown and developed, and that partnerships and trust have been increased during this time. Thank you so much, it's really a privilege, and I'm committed to doing everything I can to help.

Sameer Hossain: Thank you so much, ma'am. We will now open the floor for other FBSAC members to share some of their initial thoughts on the vision shared by Secretary Mayorkas. For the record, we do have 23 members of the FBSAC with us today, and you've heard from two of them, the Chair and the Vice Chair. I'd like to ask the members to use the "raise hand" function, and then I will call on you for some brief remarks in response to what's been shared so far. So, with that, I'd like to first recognize Mr. Salam Al-Marayati.

Salam Al-Marayati: Thank you, Sameer. I'm really proud to be part of this cohort and this team. I share Secretary Mayorkas's vision in building partnerships between our community and law enforcement, as well as the Department of Homeland Security in combating this cancer in our society of hate-motivated violence, and we can only do that as a united group, so I'm really proud to be part of this group that demonstrates this unity. Thank you.

Hyepin Im: Good morning, at least in California time. My name is Hyepin Im. I'm the Founder and CEO of Faith and Community Empowerment. I believe I'm one of the few Asians in the room, we are a late-comer, and I'm really excited for this invitation for partnership. Our organization was modeled after an African-American church, First AME in L. A, in which I saw partnerships create mutuality and welcome and influence.

We've had over 800 partners from the White House and Fortune 500, empowering, equipping faith leaders to engage in the public space. Particularly for the Asian-American community, definitely in the faith spaces, we have received our share of violence and threats, but also then as faith organizations, particularly the Korean community which represents 75% of the houses of worship in the community, many of them are business owners, and currently they also face this kind of violence. For example, this morning there will be a press conference discussing a business owner who was killed over a wig. That's the kind of the brutal reality of for many of our members of our community.

Again, I look forward to this invitation and linking with the Department. I thank you for your leadership, Secretary Mayorkas.

DHS Secretary Mayorkas: I'm going to jump in because, Ms. Im, you mentioned Los Angeles and First AME Church, and when I was in the Department of Justice, headquartered in Los Angeles, we built a partnership with Reverend Cecil Chip Murray, who led the First AME Church. It's really from that experience that I draw upon this Council because it's very important that the community understands that when we speak of partnership, we speak of partnership with all and not just some.

It was clear back then, now twenty years ago or so, that there are different levels of access, and we need to ensure that those different levels are erased, and we achieve equality of access to the services and authorities that we deliver for the community. Thank you, Ms. Im.

Hyepin Im: Thank you for that. I just want to add one more thing that I think that so many leaders, who are faith organizations that are on this commission, are rare. I would say most pastors or religious leaders at seminary were not trained in our institutions about partnership. Currently we're leading an Institute called C2, that really does that, and their eyes open and they say: 'Do we have to be nice to these elected officials?', or 'They have resources!'. So again, this idea of partnership that in terms of outreach education, resources, I believe, will create an exciting future for all members of our community.

Rabbi Moshe Hauer: Thank you, good morning. I also want to express appreciation to the Secretary for convening this and for including us in this important discussion of a partnership. I would share that one of our missions, relative to our community, is to be able to increase the level of trust between our community and the Federal response.

Speaking for the Jewish community, the Orthodox Jewish community that I represent on this on this panel, as many of you may know, that there's been a very significant increase in events of expressions of anti-Semitic hate, especially in the New York area, to those who are very visibly Orthodox Jews.

There's been a sad record of response, of effective response, to these events. I'm not talking about the kinds that make huge headlines, like the attacks which you've all read about in synagogues, but hate expressed in the streets, hate expressed around houses of worship that doesn't necessarily result in something dramatic. There hasn't been an effective follow up on perpetrators that could be able to create the necessary environment of safety that people would feel.

I think an important part of our partnership is being able to figure out together how to make such responses more effective, and to be able to communicate that to our communities, so that that trust is enhanced.

Rev. Dr. Gabriel Salguero: Thank you, Sameer, and thank you, Mr. Secretary. Thanks for all of you who are joining. I'm enthusiastic about the broad coalition, I've worked with Imam Mohamed and Rabbi Hauer, and I think this needs to be interfaith in community organizations to build a trust.

I'm the president of the National Latino Evangelical Coalition. There are about 63 million Latinos in the US. After the Orlando Pulse shooting, I officiated some of those funerals. I was also in El Paso after one of the shootings, and we recognize that faith leaders are usually in the forefront.

What is exciting about this vision is that it's interfaith and non-faith people coming together to deal with this this epidemic or pandemic of shootings that are often either race-based or targeting faith communities.

I want to thank you for this vision. I'm celebrating that it's interfaith, and I'm celebrating that it's broad, that all of us are coming together, particularly around issues of xenophobia and anti-Semitism and anti-Islamic and anti-Asian hate that we as faith leaders deal with every day.

And so, *en el lenguaje de nuestro, muchas gracias Señor Secretario, muchas gracias.*

Rev. Al Sharpton: Thank you, I am very happy and honored to be a part of this. I've known the Secretary for a while, and I'm not surprised that he would initiate such a group. Certainly, from the Los Angeles office of National Action Network, many of them knew the work he did with Reverend Chip Murray that he referred to twenty years ago.

I think that it is very important after coming out of the Anti-Hate Summit at the White House that the President and the Vice President addressed, and the Secretary was among those, that we showed that we were not just doing something for a day, but that that we were going to really put some meat and legs to what was showcased that day. I think that this group is that. The board of the National Action Network that I had, three quarters of it are faith leaders in the Black community, but I wanted to serve on this myself, because I think it's important not only that we are interfaith, but that we are visibly interfaith.

Where, when there are people in my community that are guilty of a hate crime against other communities, we must stand out and denounce that, as much as when we are victims. I think that the more we work together, the more we can call on each other to stand together against even those that may be guilty in our communities of hate crimes. I think this could be a working way to get this that can heal the nation, so I'm committed to put in the time personally and I'll salute the Secretary and all those involved, and I will be very much involved in the sessions. Thank you very much.

Mayya Saab: Thank you so much. My name is Maya Saab. I am the Executive Director of the Faith-Based Information Sharing and Analysis Organization. We are an all-faiths and an all-hazards information sharing organization. We cover physical threats, cyber threats, public health,

and natural hazards. We welcome participation from houses of worship, charities, faith-based schools, and their affiliated organizations as well.

So, by way of our collaborative workspace, we connect those security practitioners' boots on the ground, so they can share their challenges and roadblocks related to securing their faith-based organizations.

We encourage conversations whereby those security practitioners can learn from and teach one another. We also encourage our partners, such as DHS and FBI, and locally based partners to join us, so they can hear firsthand from the community on those challenges and roadblocks.

We often use the terms 'stronger together', and 'force multipliers'. Our efforts allow us to be responsive to the changing needs of the community based on the ever-changing threat environment.

Thank you for allowing me to contribute. I look forward to continuing to build and strengthen not only our partnership with our government partners, but also with all members of this council, who serve the faith-based community in such tremendous ways. Thank you.

Commissioner Kenneth Hodder: Good morning. Thank you, Sameer. Thank you, Chairperson Gill, and Secretary Mayorkas. One of the greatest privileges of my life is to have been called by God to serve the needs of the least and the last and the lost as an officer of the Salvation Army.

The Salvation Army seeks to serve people wherever they are, from whatever their circumstances might be, and whatever their need might be. But, as you have suggested, Mr. Secretary, this is both an opportunity and a responsibility.

If we are going to build trust, if we are going to increase fairness, we must identify both. We must see the opportunity that this body presents not only to our various faith groups, but to the nation as a whole, and we must take our responsibilities seriously, to continue to find ways in which people will feel loved and accepted and cared for.

I'm therefore honored to be a part of this group, and I look forward to serving. God bless you.

Sheriff Garry McFadden: Hi, I'm Sheriff Garry McFadden of Mecklenburg County. I can tell you there are very few times that I'm extremely excited to be on a committee, and this is one. I've had many conversations in the background, I was just sitting back on a meeting with the Major County Sheriffs of America and the National Sheriff Association with the Secretary, although he may not have seen me. But I've been on most of the calls, and I can tell you when this was announced I was very happy.

If you don't recognize what we have here and what is the committee formed of: when you can see every nationality, every group represented, and it's not one-sided it's not so many males or not so many females, I'm sure that we can all tap into our resources and be the example of what America wants to see. When we were talking about the mosques, the temples, the synagogues, and the churches, they're going to look to us for the answers.

But I can tell you that I'm happy. This is my 40th year in law enforcement, and I told my wife last night I think I finally found my niche: to travel and help other people in America. But, as you can hear, I'm excited, and I told everybody: we have a plan, just wait for it, and we will see you in the future.

But thank you all. I'm excited to be here, and whatever this Sheriff can do for you, please let me know. I travel well, and it doesn't cost you a penny. I have a great budget and commission, and they allow me to travel the US as I do. So, if you need this Sheriff in your county or city, please call me, thank you.

Chandru Acharya: Thank you, Sameer. And thank you, Secretary Mayorkas. It's such a pleasure and honor that you put together such a diverse and well-rounded team of experts, and it's been a real privilege and honor to represent the 1.5 million Hindu Americans and be their voice here and make them feel more secure.

My body of work has been in the interfaith area for the last ten years, and I appreciate this opportunity to serve the community and serve the Council. Thank you very much.

Rev. Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune: Thank you. I just wanted to affirm Secretary Mayorkas's comments. I especially appreciate that you named the reality of trust being an issue in many of our communities. Coming from a Black church background, it certainly is a part of the challenge that we all have in terms of working together and making sure our communities are safe, especially our churches. We are haunted in many ways by what happened at Mother Emmanuel Church in 2015, and we continue to face threats in a number of ways.

With this great assembly of faith-based leaders, many of whom I've had to work with before. Seeing the rise in anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim and so many others: Hyepin mentioned the anti-Asian hate, I think this is a great moment for us to be together, and I'm glad you named one of the obstacles that we will face. But I think with this great group we'll be able to make great strides.

I appreciate being a part of this team. I should say I work as Chief Operating Officer for the National Council of Churches, and I'm glad to be a part of this.

Rev. Naomi Washington-Leapheart: Good morning, everybody. Thank you so much to the Secretary and to the entire Department for this wonderful opportunity to serve, I'm so grateful. I'm Reverend Naomi Washington-Leapheart, and in addition to being an ordained minister with the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries and the United Church of Christ, I also serve in local government as the Director of Faith-based and Interfaith Affairs for the Mayor's office in the city of Philadelphia.

I'll just echo what has been said: I'm looking forward to nuanced conversations among this group about the unique context within which we are trying to talk about securing our communities. Certainly Philadelphia is, like other cities in the nation, deeply concerned about how we secure our communities in a context of increasing and escalating violence. I'm looking forward to connecting the dots between what's going on in local government, at least in Philadelphia, and what we might do on the Federal level.

I also come to this table as a member of the LGBTQ community, and so I'm looking forward to bringing that perspective to these conversations, because this kind of identity-based and hate-based violence cuts across many of the intersections of our lives, and so really looking forward to this kind of deep engagement and I'm grateful for the opportunity to contribute. Thank you.

Kimberly Burgo: Yes, good morning. Thank you very much. I'm very honored and blessed to be part of this and selected to take part in your vision, Mr. Secretary to really view, discuss, and address those acts of hate that poison our freedom of religion, and ensure that this right is available to all peoples, and accessible in all walks of life. I think that's a vision that all of us here share, and I'm very excited to be a part of it. Thank you very much.

Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner: Thank you, it's an honor to have the last word. For those of us who fasted on Yom Kippur and broke our fast last night, what a blessing, a *mechayeh*, a return to life. This, at least for me, is my first professional and public act after the conclusion of Yom Kippur. So thank you, Secretary Mayorkas, and for all of the Jewish family on this call. What a blessing!

I want to just say two brief remarks. One, I want to associate myself with my colleague, Rabbi Hauer, coming out of the Orthodox community. I'm Rabbi Jonah Pesner. I represent the Reform Jewish movement, the largest and most diverse denomination in Jewish life. Many of my Jewish family in my denomination don't walk the streets looking outwardly Jewish because we're not bound by legal proscriptions for what we wear, particularly a head covering, or yarmulke. I want to say, as the leader of the reformed Jewish denomination, we stand squarely in solidarity with all of our Jewish family who are targeted because they are phenotypically or outwardly looking Jewish. So, Rabbi Hauer, thank you for raising that, and I associate myself with those comments.

I want to also add to the beauty of this call a reminder of the intersectionality of our identities. Fifteen percent of the American Jewish community is not white. There are Black Jews, brown Jews, there are Latino, there are Asian Jews, there are Jews of all hues. And I know that for my Christian family and my Muslim family, from the Sikh community, for the Hindu, the Quaker, and the full of diversity in the array; many of our people experience hate crimes and targeting because of their many faceted identities, whether they're LGBTQIA, or they have some kind of racial minority, and or because of their religious minority status.

So let's, as this beautiful tapestry of God's creation, hold that tension as we stand in solidarity and use the Department of Homeland Security bringing us together to make it a safe space for all of our people with their multifaceted and rich identities.

Sameer Hossain: Thank you, sir, and thank you to all our members for sharing your insights and for all of your thoughtful input for our discussion today. That concludes the moderated discussion portion of our meeting today. The next two items are the oath of office, and then a few words from the Secretary for our members. With that, I want to turn it over to Mr. Secretary to either administer the oath or share a few thoughts.

DHS Secretary Mayorkas: I think I'm going to do both. I just want to really communicate as forcefully as I can - everyone has been so generous in expressing their gratitude for their membership in this Council, but it is our gratitude to all of you for your willingness to serve. We

are together going to tackle the tough issues. We do have work ahead of us, and I am so eager to do it with all of you on behalf of the principles that we all shared and expressed, so thank you. And we're going to jump into action very shortly, as a Council, as a collective group for a collective purpose, an inclusive group for an inclusive purpose.

And with that, I would ask if everyone would be kind enough to rise and raise one's right hand, and then, when I start the oath with the first word of I, if each of you could state your own name, and then we'll take it from there, and I'm going to rise as well.

If everyone raising your right hand, would repeat after me:

“I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic;

that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same, that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion;

and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter.

So help me God.”

Thank you so much, congratulations, and I am eager and excited to begin our work together. Thank you, Sameer.

Sameer Hossain: Thank you so much, Mr. Secretary, and congratulations from all of us to the FBSAC members. We will now proceed with the closing of this meeting. This meeting is officially adjourned. We thank you for your participation. Have a wonderful day.

DHS Secretary Mayorkas: Thank you all, talk soon.

DATED: October 26, 2022.

Michael J. Miron
Committee Management Officer