



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



### **John F. Kelly Sworn In As Fifth Secretary of Homeland Security**

“I am honored and humbled to take on this responsibility to serve alongside the magnificent men and women of the Department of Homeland Security, and, I look forward to protecting our nation, its citizens, and preserving our liberty and upholding the rule of law as I continue my service to this great country. I ask for your patience and prayers as I take on this tremendous task together with you, and my only plea is that together we focus our loyalty on the Constitution that we all have sworn to preserve and protect and the nation we love.”

*-- Secretary John F. Kelly*

### **Message from Acting Officer Veronica Venture**



It is a great honor to take on the role of Acting Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties at DHS. Since 2011, I have served in dual positions at CRCL as the Deputy Officer and the Director for Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity, leading all aspects of the Department’s EEO and Diversity polices, products, and services to optimize the effectiveness of the Department’s personnel and operations.

I am pleased to now oversee CRCL’s broad portfolio of work, integrating civil rights and civil liberties into all of the Department’s activities, including: regularly engaging with diverse community-based stakeholders, reviewing and investigating civil rights and civil liberties complaints filed by the public involving DHS policies and activities, shaping DHS policies and programs through partnerships with Components, providing civil rights and civil liberties training to DHS personnel, and leading the Department’s EEO and Diversity programs, among many other significant functions.

CRCL will continue its critical mission to support the Department to secure the Nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.

I look forward to interacting with our many stakeholders in the near future, and I encourage you to reach out to us with input or feedback about our Office. You may email us at [CRCLOutreach@hq.dhs.gov](mailto:CRCLOutreach@hq.dhs.gov) or visit our [Facebook page](#).

#### **Inside**

[Secretary Kelly Sworn In As Fifth Secretary of Homeland Security](#)

[Message from Acting Officer Veronica Venture](#)

[International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM/C](#)

[CRCL Hosts Mombasa Delegation](#)

[CRCL on the Road](#)

## **CRCL Recognizes International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation**

February 6, 2017, was the [International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation](#) – a day set aside to raise awareness about this harmful traditional practice and renew commitment to the health and well-being of all women, girls, and communities by eliminating the practice. In recognition, CRCL is pleased to share a new [outreach strategy that addresses female genital mutilation and cutting \(FGM/C\)](#). The strategy was developed through the [DHS Council on Combatting Violence Against Women](#), which coordinates the Department’s efforts to stop sexual assault and other crimes and to ensure the effective administration of laws preventing violence against women. This strategy reflects the Department-wide commitment to enhance and broaden work that is already underway to end FGM/C in the U.S., and describes planned actions to educate key U.S. stakeholders on this practice.

FGM/C is a serious human rights abuse, a federal crime, and when done to children, child abuse. It has no health benefits and can lead to a range of physical and mental health problems. This practice continues to negatively affect millions of women and girls around the world, including in the U.S.

DHS opposes FGM/C, no matter the type, degree, or severity, and no matter the motivation for performing it. We continue to work with our interagency partners to end FGM/C and raise awareness of the harm it causes, the U.S. laws prohibiting the practice, and the assistance available to women and girls who have undergone or are at risk of FGM/C.

We hope that you will join us in this work – our [resource guide](#) provides opportunities for engagement with DHS in this effort. To learn more about FGM/C and find additional resources, please visit [USCIS’ webpage](#) on this topic.

## **CRCL Hosts Mombasa Delegation**

This month, CRCL met with a delegation from the city of Mombasa, Kenya, through the U.S. State Department’s [International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#). The IVLP is an exchange program for current and emerging foreign leaders to engage with U.S. counterparts on a variety of professional interests. CRCL regularly engages in the IVLP program to provide expertise on best practices in community engagement with various international partners.



The delegation was led by His Eminence, Governor Hassan Ali Joho of Mombasa, and included the Honorable Lewa Tendai Mtana, County Executive Member and Chair of Policy Committee, and Mr. Dennis Mosota, Chair of Educational Community Board.

During the meeting, the delegation spoke with CRCL and other interagency partners about building a grassroots approach to security, resilience, and countering violent extremism initiatives in Mombasa. Discussion focused shared challenges and successes involving a whole-of-community approach to resilience and security. The delegation also shared efforts underway to improve community preparedness and resilience to natural disasters, as Mombasa is a largely coastal community. CRCL shared DHS resources on disaster preparedness, further highlighting the multiple benefits of international exchange efforts.

## **CRCL on the Road, February 2017**

### ***February 1-2 – Brussels, Belgium***

CRCL presented at a State Department-coordinated seminar on government efforts to counter violent extremism.

### ***February 9 – Tampa, Florida***

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

### ***February 13-14 – Denver, Colorado***

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

### ***February 20-23 – Columbus, Ohio***

CRCL a series of community engagement townhall meetings.

### ***February 23-25 – Boston, Massachusetts***

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

### ***February 9 – Portland, Oregon***

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

### ***February 13 – Tallahassee, Florida***

CRCL conducted an academic engagement townhall meeting with Florida State University.

### ***February 15-16 – The Hague, Netherlands***

CRCL presented on best practices in civil rights and community engagement at a State Department-coordinated event with international partners.

### ***February 23 – Chicago, Illinois***

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

### ***February 28 – New York, New York***

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.


## **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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