



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.



Statement by Secretary Jeh C. Johnson on the Attacks in Brussels, Belgium

As the President said, we stand in solidarity with the Belgian people in condemning the terrorist attacks that occurred in Brussels, we mourn the loss of those killed, and we will do what we can to help Belgian authorities bring to justice those responsible for the attacks.

At present, we have no specific, credible intelligence of any plot to conduct similar attacks here in the United States. That said, we remain very focused on the threat posed by lone terrorist actors who may lack direct connection to a foreign terrorist organization; we are concerned that such radicalized individuals or small groups could carry out an attack in the Homeland with little warning. We also remain very engaged in the effort to identify and disrupt foreign terrorist fighters who may seek to travel to or from the United States.

The Department of Homeland Security, along with our partners in federal law enforcement and the intelligence community, are doing a number of things to monitor events in Brussels, work with the authorities there, and continue to secure our Homeland.

[Read the entire statement.](#)

DHS Celebrates Women’s History Month

In commemoration of Women’s History Month, CRCL participated in a panel discussion titled: “Working Mothers: A Perspective from Women in the Federal Government” at U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) offices. ICE Director Sarah Saldaña welcomed attendees and stressed the importance of celebrating Women’s History Month, especially within law enforcement organizations. CRCL Officer Megan Mack moderated the panel, which featured working mothers from various offices throughout ICE. During the event, panelists discussed their career paths and offered personal perspectives on how to achieve balance between work and family. Panelists covered a variety of issues relevant to working parents including: what the Department is doing to improve the hiring and retention of women, especially in law enforcement careers; how new and innovative workforce policies focused on work/life balance can allow employees to be successful and improve morale for all; and how working mothers and fathers can reduce and relieve stress both at work and at home.

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ICE Director Saldaña and CRCL Officer Mack welcome attendees to the Women’s History Month event

DHS Issues Final Rule to Protect Religious Liberties for Beneficiaries of Social Programs

DHS, along with other federal agencies, [published a final rule](#) that will provide new religious liberty protections for beneficiaries of federally funded social service programs, while also adding new protections for the ability of religious providers to compete for government funds on the same basis as any other private organization. The Department is proud to now have a final rule in place that provides clear guidance to the organizations that participate in our social service programs, and protects beneficiaries of those vital programs. For example, a beneficiary who participates in disaster case management that is offered by a faith-based organization funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency must be notified in writing that: he or she cannot be discriminated against based on religion; cannot be required to attend or participate in any privately funded religious activities that are offered separate from this federally funded program; and may request an alternative provider if the beneficiary objects to the religious character of the organization. At the same time, the regulations require that all decisions about DHS's financial assistance be based solely on merit, without regard to an organization's religious affiliation or lack thereof. The regulations—which are being published after [public notice and comment](#)—formally implement Executive Order 13559, *Principles and Policymaking Criteria for Partnerships with Faith-Based and Other Neighborhood Organizations* (which amends Executive Order 13279).

CRCL Officer Hosts DHS Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Committee Meeting

CRCL Officer Megan Mack recently hosted the quarterly meeting of the DHS Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Committee, a group of national nongovernmental organizations who engage with the Department on immigration policy issues related to civil rights and civil liberties. During the meeting, discussion focused on: how CRCL's ability to monitor and investigate complaints will be affected by the fiscal year 2017 budget; construction at CBP's facility in McAllen, particularly concerning holding cells for children; the issue of body-worn cameras for CBP officers; CBP checkpoints and medical safe passage in Texas; backlash against diverse communities on social media; and the Department's efforts to counter violent extremism.

CRCL Hosts Roundtable in Central Florida

This month, CRCL convened its quarterly central Florida community engagement roundtable at the Tampa Sikh Gurdwara (Temple). Nearly 60 community leaders and government officials attended the meeting; for most, it was their first time setting foot in a Sikh temple. Federal partners joined from U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Transportation Security Administration (TSA), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The United Sikhs Religious and Educational Foundation, a Tampa-based community organization, gave an informative cultural awareness presentation. Other presentations, requested by community stakeholders, included: a robust presentation by TSA to clarify and explain the process of screening religious clothing (including head wear); a presentation by DOJ on the areas of jurisdiction under the Civil Rights Act and the Hate Crimes Prevention Act and how communities can impact the delivery of community relations services; and a presentation by the National Protection and Programs Directorate's Protective Security Advisor for the Tampa area focusing on DHS tools available to support faith-based communities, such as grants, security assessments, and active shooter training.



Roundtable at the Tampa Sikh Gurdwara

CRCL FY 2015 Third and Fourth Quarter Report to Congress

CRCL has released its [FY 2015 Third and Fourth Quarters Report to Congress](#), as required by section 803 of the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, 42 U.S.C. § 2000ee-1(f). The Report details statistical data analysis of civil right and civil liberties investigations from April 2015 – September 2015.

CRCL Participates in Strong Cities Network Event

CRCL staff recently participated in the Strong Cities Network Workshop in Washington, D.C. hosted by the U.S. Department of State. The event brought together members of the [Strong Cities Network](#) (SCN) to discuss best practices in countering violent extremism (CVE) across the globe.

SCN is a global network of cities working together to build resilience to prevent violent extremism. SCN was created to allow the exchange of ideas and methods to strengthen the safety, security, and cohesion of communities and cities. SCN connects city leaders through practical workshops, training seminars, and sustained city partnerships.

During the summit, a diverse group of domestic and international CVE practitioners, including representatives from Federal, state, and local governments; law enforcement; academia; and the healthcare industry, spoke on a number of topics related to strengthening community resilience to violent extremism. CRCL staff discussed best practices for ensuring that engagement with local communities respects the civil rights and civil liberties of all individuals.



Participants at the Strong Cities Network event in Washington, D.C.

CRCL on the Road, March

March 10 – Tampa, Florida

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

March 18 – Newark, New Jersey

CRCL participated in the New Jersey Homeland Security Conference.

March 28 – Houston, Texas

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

March 30 – Columbus, Ohio

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

March 16 – Seattle, Washington

CRCL convened a community engagement town hall with diverse community organizations.

March 23 – Detroit, Michigan

CRCL attended the BRIDGES community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

March 29 – Dallas, Texas

CRCL participated in the DOJ, Civil Rights Division Hate Crimes Roundtable.

March 30 – Phoenix, Arizona

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.

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. For more information, including how to make a civil rights or civil liberties complaint about DHS activities, visit: www.dhs.gov/crcl.

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