



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.



Secretary Johnson Meets with Muslim Community Leaders in Michigan

DHS leaders traveled to Detroit, Michigan to host a community engagement roundtable meeting, emphasizing the Department’s commitment to engaging with local communities to keep our nation safe and secure. There, Secretary Jeh Johnson, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Director Leon Rodriguez, and CRCL Officer Megan Mack met with recently resettled refugees fleeing the conflict in Syria as well as other refugees from Iraq and Yemen at a CRCL roundtable held at the local USCIS district office. Also in attendance were Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, Congresswoman Debbie Dingell, Congressman John Conyers, and Detroit Mayor Mike Duggin.

Around 50 community leaders, advocates, and nongovernment organizations attended the roundtable meeting. CRCL staff, who are well-versed in a number of languages, interpreted for participants, many of whom are not yet English-language proficient. The roundtable began with a [video, narrated by Secretary Johnson](#), on the refugee vetting and resettlement process, which was well received.

Secretary Johnson welcomed attendees and reiterated the Department’s commitment to ensuring that refugees are safely and appropriately resettled throughout the nation. He discussed the important role refugees play in American communities and in furthering the diversity of the nation. The Secretary also shared personal anecdotes about the importance of overcoming discrimination and intolerance. Roundtable participants dialogued on a number of issues including resettlement and integration in U.S. communities, uniting refugee families, and international involvement in the war in Syria.

Later, Secretary Johnson visited Dearborn, where he hosted a roundtable meeting with interfaith student groups to encourage them to help the Department counter violent extremism. The Secretary also delivered remarks to students at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, and dialogued with them on what homeland security means to the next generation of leaders. Read [insights from these students](#) on the DHS blog.

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Statement by Secretary Jeh C. Johnson on Southwest Border Security

As I have said repeatedly, our borders are not open to illegal migration; if you come here illegally, we will send you back consistent with our laws and values.

In the spring and summer of 2014 we faced a significant spike in families and unaccompanied children from Central America attempting to cross our southern border illegally. In response, we took a number of actions in collaboration with the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, and the numbers declined dramatically. In Fiscal Year 2015, the number of apprehensions by U.S. Border Patrol of those attempting to cross our southern border illegally -- an indicator of total attempts to cross the border illegally -- decreased to 331,333. With the exception of one year, this was the lowest number of apprehensions on our southern border since 1972. In recent months, however, the rate of apprehensions on our southern border has begun to climb again.

In November 2014, I issued new priorities for immigration enforcement as part of the President's immigration accountability executive actions. These new Department-wide priorities focus our enforcement resources on convicted criminals and threats to public safety. These new enforcement priorities also focus on border security, namely the removal of those apprehended at the border or who came here illegally after January 1, 2014.

We must enforce the law in accordance with these priorities, and secure our borders. *Read the Secretary's full statement in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).*

DHS Releases Updated Law Enforcement Guide on U and T Visas

DHS recently [released updated guidance for law enforcement](#) on resources available to victims of serious crimes, including human trafficking. The [U and T Visa Law Enforcement Resource Guide](#) provides federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement officials with helpful information to support the investigations and prosecution of crimes involving qualified immigrant victims.

Lack of legal immigration status in the United States may be among the reasons that some victims choose not to come forward or work with law enforcement. Perpetrators and human traffickers also use victims' lack of legal status as leverage to exploit and control them. Congress created the U and T nonimmigrant visas to address this with the passage of the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (including the Battered Immigrant Women's Protection Act) in October 2000. Congress sought not only to create tools to help law enforcement prosecute perpetrators of crimes committed against immigrants, but also to strengthen relations between law enforcement and immigrant communities.

USCIS helps to protect victims of these crimes by providing immigration relief through U and T visas. Law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, judges, and government officials also play an important role in this process. The updated Guide includes:

- information about U and T visa requirements
- information on the I-918B certification and I-914B declaration processes
- suggested best practices
- answers to important and frequently asked questions from judges, prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and other officials, and
- contact information for DHS personnel on U and T visa issues.

The U and T Visa Law Enforcement Resource Guide was first released in 2012, and the Department will continue to provide updates to our law enforcement partners so that together we can protect victims and put an end to these terrible crimes. Learn more about the U and T visa programs, as well as other protections for immigrant victims by visiting [DHS Immigration Options for Victims of Crimes](#).

Expansion of U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for Central Americans

Secretary of State John Kerry announced [plans to expand access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program](#) for vulnerable families and individuals from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. The State Department will collaborate with the UN Human Rights Council and its NGO partners to identify persons in need of refugee protection—those targeted by criminal gangs, human rights defenders who have been targeted, and others. The expansion will:

- Expand access to resettlement for asylum seekers from the Northern Triangle.
- Offer a legal alternative to the dangerous and unlawful journey many are currently taking in the hands of human smugglers.
- Enable the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees and its nongovernmental partners in the region to identify persons in need of refugee protection.
- Better address the needs of those threatened by criminal gang violence and domestic violence, human rights defenders who have been targeted, and others.

The Administration remains focused on securing the Southwest border and enforcing immigration laws as top priorities (as also [outlined by Secretary Johnson](#)), while also establishing additional avenues for safe, legal, and orderly migration. The [U.S. Strategy for Engagement in Central America](#) was developed to address many of the underlying conditions driving migration, which include criminal violence, domestic and sexual violence, and lack of economic opportunity. This strategy and new commitment to expand refugee admissions indicates the U.S. will continue to be a leader in helping to protect the world's most vulnerable refugees through resettlement efforts, while ensuring the security of our nation is preserved.

DHS Partners with Metropolitan Cities to Combat Human Trafficking

In recognition of National Human Trafficking Awareness Month, DHS announced new partnerships between the DHS Blue Campaign—the unified voice for DHS's efforts to combat human trafficking—and the [District of Columbia](#) and the [city of Birmingham, Alabama](#) to raise awareness about human trafficking.

“Partnerships like these are important because no one can fight human trafficking alone,” said DHS Blue Campaign Chair Maria Odom. “Enabling citizens to recognize and report this heinous crime will help to identify and rescue victims and bring perpetrators to justice.”

Through these partnerships, Blue Campaign tools and resources, including posters, will be posted at transportation hubs in both cities, including all throughout the Metro system in the District of Columbia to raise awareness and help local residents to identify and recognize indicators of human trafficking and to help potential victims seek support. In addition, these materials will be placed at relevant District agency offices and distributed to public safety personnel in Birmingham to provide information on how to recognize and report suspected cases of human trafficking.

The DHS Blue Campaign works in collaboration with law enforcement, government, non-governmental and private organizations, to protect the basic right of freedom and to bring those who exploit human lives to justice. Through the Blue Campaign, CRCL works with DHS Components to develop and advance protective policies, procedures for trafficked persons. We also play an integral role in developing [training for state and local law enforcement](#) on how to recognize human trafficking and respond appropriately.

By [Presidential Proclamation](#), January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Awareness Month. Throughout January, the DHS Blue Campaign highlighted the Department's work to end human trafficking and continue to bring awareness to this terrible crime. For more information, visit www.dhs.gov/bluecampaign.

CRCL on the Road, January

January 13 – Detroit, Michigan

CRCL convened a community engagement roundtable and other meetings with Secretary Johnson and Muslim community leaders.

January 25-28 – Denver, Colorado

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

January 16 – Columbus, Ohio

CRCL convened a community engagement youth town hall with the Somali community.

January 28 – Boston, Massachusetts

CRCL participated in the BRIDGES roundtable with local federal partners and diverse community leaders.

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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