



The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties 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 Stakeholders in New York City

Earlier this month Secretary Jeh Johnson met with a host of community leaders and other stakeholders in New York City to share the Department's commitment to further develop strategies to counter violent extremism (CVE), and discuss continued efforts to integrate civil rights and civil liberties protections into immigration policy. CRCL coordinated these meetings as part of its role to facilitate the Department's engagement among diverse communities, law enforcement, and advocacy groups.

Secretary Johnson first participated in a CVE-enhanced community engagement roundtable at New York University's Brennan Center for Justice with New York Police Department leadership and non-governmental organizations (NGO). At the meeting, the Secretary shared new developments in the DHS strategy for CVE and solicited feedback on best methods to identify and address evolving threats.

Secretary Johnson then joined community leaders for a roundtable at the central branch of the Brooklyn Public Library where he made an appeal for public participation in the homeland security mission, and encouraged engagement with the Department. Following that, the group engaged in a robust discussion on immigration enforcement, detention, and other related topics.

CRCL first established its New York roundtables in 2014, which currently take place in Manhattan and Staten Island. In addition to the New York visit, Secretary Johnson has participated in several of CRCL's roundtables and other events across the country in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Columbus (Ohio).

Read coverage of Secretary Johnson's visit in [The New York Times](#) and the [Brooklyn Daily Eagle](#).



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CRCL Presents with U.S. Delegation Before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva

CRCL Officer Megan Mack was a member of the U.S. delegation to present the nation's second periodic review to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland. The Universal Periodic Review process is an opportunity for the U.S., along with other member states, to reflect on and improve its human rights record. The U.S. presentation highlighted: protecting women against violent crimes through the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013; ending the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy in the U.S. Armed Forces and expanding LGBT rights; and bringing landmark legal cases challenging racially discriminatory voting laws, and protecting access to the ballot. The delegation also noted the recent tragic deaths of unarmed black Americans across the country, and the need to investigate and bring civil actions against unlawful or discriminatory systemic policing practices.



As the DHS representative, Officer Mack presented the Department's efforts to ensure civil and human rights considerations while carrying out its mission, especially in the areas of immigration policy and border security. The Department works to ensure that state and local law enforcement agencies and others do not implement laws in a manner that discriminate against any community; that individuals who are facing removal from the United States receive due process with DHS taking steps to encourage legal representation; and that individuals who are detained are treated humanely and in a manner consistent with the U.S. Constitution, federal laws, and applicable international obligations. Officer Mack also noted the significant progress the Department has made in addressing all aspects of human trafficking through investigating and prosecuting traffickers, promoting public awareness, and improving methods for identifying and providing services to victims of trafficking.

The U.S. delegation was led by Ambassador Keith Harper, Representative of the United States to the UN Human Rights Council, and included representatives from the Departments of State, Defense, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Interior, and the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as the State of Illinois. Read [statements from certain members of the U.S. delegation](#).

CRCL Hosts Stakeholder Meeting on Banking Issues

CRCL recently hosted a stakeholder meeting, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Treasury, to address the issue of bank account closures among NGOs that provide relief and support to Syrian refugees. Community leaders first raised the issue with Secretary Johnson last year during CRCL's quarterly roundtables in Chicago and Columbus (Ohio) where the Secretary directed CRCL to further investigate the issue. CRCL Officer Megan Mack met with Deputy Assistant Secretary for Terrorist Financing Jennifer Fowler and developed the meeting to bring banks and NGOs together with federal partners to hear their concerns. Meeting participants included the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Syria Desk of the U.S. State Department, Wells Fargo Bank, J.P. Morgan Chase, Syrian American Council, United African Congress, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, and several other relief organizations.

NGO representatives expressed their frustration with private banks closing their accounts based on their ties to Syria even though their work is solely focused on humanitarian aid for refugees, and that they receive USAID grants to assist in this work. Attendees discussed possible solutions which included developing an avenue for grievances and creating a verification process. CRCL will continue to facilitate discussions with Treasury and this group to further resolve this issue.

This meeting, the first of its kind to take place, was made possible through CRCL's robust engagement efforts and relationships with diverse community leaders and advocacy groups across the country. CRCL's work on this issue is part of its enhanced engagement with communities impacted by, or with strong equities in, the Department's civil rights and civil liberties priorities focused on individuals who travel overseas to support or promote designated terrorist organizations.

Improving Access for Individuals with Disabilities

DHS recently released instruction for Components to implement Management Directive 065-01, [Nondiscrimination for Individuals with Disabilities in DHS-Conducted Programs and Activities](#). The instruction requires each Component to: designate disability access coordinators; conduct a self-evaluation of their programs and activities; and develop and implement a plan to strengthen compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

The Rehabilitation Act commits the federal government to ending discrimination against persons with disabilities in federal employment and in federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities. CRCL coordinates the Department's compliance with and enforcement of the Act.

In 2013 CRCL established the DHS Disability Access Working Group to further the Department's commitment to the principles of Section 504. Through this working group, Components share strategies for effective communication, program and physical accessibility, and reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities in the Department's programs and activities. In addition to the management directive and instruction, DHS developed a [Guide to Interacting with People Who Have Disabilities](#) to assist DHS personnel, contractors, and grantees in their interactions with individuals with disabilities.

CRCL on the Road, May

May 5-8 – Brussels, Belgium

CRCL delivered CVE training and the community awareness briefing as part of a U.S. State Department-led program.

May 8 – Birmingham, Alabama

CRCL held an engagement town hall and delivered the community awareness briefing to stakeholders.

May 11-13 – London, UK

CRCL delivered community engagement training and the community awareness briefing as part of a State Department-led program.

May 20 – Columbus, Ohio

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

May 23 – Minneapolis, Minnesota

CRCL convened an East African Women's Summit with the Somali-American community.

May 7 – New York, New York

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

May 11 – Geneva, Switzerland

CRCL Officer Megan Mack presented Universal Periodic Review to the UN Mission as part of the U.S. delegation.

May 19-22 – Buffalo, New York

CRCL delivered community awareness briefings in coordination with the National Counter Terrorism Center.

May 21 – Tampa, Florida

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

May 27 – Denver, Colorado

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.

CRCL Phone: 202-401-1474 • Toll Free: 866-644-8360 • TTY: 202-401-0470 • Toll Free TTY: 866-644-8361

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