

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Homeland Security Academic Partnership Council
Virtual Zoom Meeting
Wednesday, December 13, 2023
3:31 – 4:04 p.m. EST

The Homeland Security Academic Partnership Council (HSAPC) convened on December 13, 2023, from 3:31 – 4:04 p.m. EST. The virtual meeting was open to members of the public under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, P.L. 92-463 and 5 U.S.C. § 552b.

PARTICIPANTS:

The following individuals participated during the meeting:

HSAPC Members:

- Elisa Villanueva Beard (Chair)
- Dr. Walter Bumphus (Vice Chair)
- Dr. Adela de la Torre
- Dr. Miriam Feldblum
- Dr. Antonio R. Flores
- Dr. Farnam Jahanian
- Dr. Cynthia Kelley
- Chief John Ojeisekhoba
- Dr. Tamarah Pfeiffer
- Michael H. Schill
- Dr. Cynthia D. Shapira
- Barbara Snyder
- Suzanne Elise Walsh

DHS:

- Alejandro N. Mayorkas, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security
- Brenda F. Abdelall, Assistant Secretary, Office of Partnership and Engagement
- Traci Silas, Designated Federal Officer, Homeland Security Academic Partnership Council and Executive Director, Office of Academic Engagement

TRACI SILAS called the meeting to order, announced that Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas would join shortly, and expressed thanks to Assistant Secretary Brenda Abdelall, the Council, and meeting attendees. She gave special thanks to Lori Sims, who stepped in to support the HSAPC as Alternate Designated Federal Officer (ADFO), noted that the Council had reached a quorum with 12 members in attendance, and invited Secretary Mayorkas to provide remarks.

SECRETARY ALEJANDRO N. MAYORKAS: “Thank you all for joining us. For many, the classroom and campus, from primary schools to colleges and universities, do not feel safe right now. They have not felt safe for weeks since October 7, and in fact, are not safe. We’ve seen far too many instances of the intimidation of and attacks against Jewish, Muslim, and Arab-Americans in schools across our country. I’m very eager to receive and so much appreciate your report and recommendations about what more we can do to equip all of you to achieve the safety of and security for everyone in the academic community. Thank you for your devotion of time, energy, expertise, and care in support of the safety, security, and well-being of everyone in the academic community.”

CHAIR ELISA VILLANUEVA BEARD thanked the Secretary, the Council, and attendees. She noted the Council was meeting to receive its first report, following a 14-day sprint to

respond to the Secretary's tasking. Chair Villanueva Beard thanked the School and Campus Safety Considering the Conflict in the Middle East Subcommittee co-chairs, Chief John Ojeisekhoba and Dr. Cindy Shapira, for their leadership and round-the-clock efforts, as well as the Subcommittee contributors, Dr. Miriam Feldblum, Barbara Snyder, Assistant Chief Rudy Perez, and Randi Weingarten. She also thanked the HSAPC staff, including Traci Silas and Lori Sims. Chair Villanueva Beard invited Chief Ojeisekhoba and Dr. Shapira to present the Subcommittee's findings and recommendations and requested that all members note the changes or additions they would like to offer to the report.

CHIEF JOHN OJEISEKHOPA thanked Secretary Mayorkas and Chair Villanueva Beard. He explained that the Secretary tasked the HSAPC to form a Subcommittee to address school and campus safety considering the Middle East conflict and submit its findings and recommendations within 14 days, given the conflict's pressing nature. Chief Ojeisekhoba said that for an academic institution to carry out its educational mission, every member of the community must be made to feel safe and protected. He noted that the Subcommittee was asked to provide advice and recommendations on how DHS can support K-12 and higher education communities in fostering safety and inclusivity in schools and on campuses, and, outside of funding, what additional resources and capabilities the Department should provide to support campus law enforcement professionals and others charged with keeping academic communities safe. Chief Ojeisekhoba praised the hard work of Traci Silas and her team to support the Subcommittee by arranging briefings with DHS and external experts. He said the Subcommittee heard three overarching themes during the briefings, which were reflected in the report's findings:

1. Campuses and schools need help to address the identification and management of potential violence and threats on campuses and schools while recognizing that Jewish, Muslim, and sometimes Sikh students, parents, and communities are hurting.
2. The challenges faced by higher education campuses and K-12 schools in identifying and managing potential and real threats and violence is further amplified by confusion and tension around multiple campus and school objectives.
3. Existing DHS violence prevention, preparedness, and response programs and resources should be retooled, made more readily available and accessible, and in plain language, to the leadership of K-12 schools, higher education institutions, law enforcement, and public safety.

DR. CYNTHIA D. SHAPIRA thanked Chief Ojeisekhoba and outlined the Subcommittee's eight, top-level recommendations:

1. Within the next 14 days, retool and disseminate relevant DHS programs and initiatives currently in use within the violence prevention/mitigation space tailored to the specific characteristics of antisemitism and Islamophobia currently being manifested on higher education campuses and in the K-12 setting.
2. Immediately address gaps and disconnects in information sharing and clarify DHS resources available to campuses, recognizing the volatile, escalating, and sometimes urgent campus conditions during this Middle East conflict. Please include top decision-makers, such as presidents.
3. Build a trusting environment that encourages reporting of antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents, threats, and violence. With a partnership approach, work with applicable

federal agencies, campus administrators, law enforcement, and Fusion Centers all over the country to establish this culture in lockstep with school officials in communities.

4. Recognize and amplify that the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties has Title VI responsibilities.
5. Earmark congressional funds for emergency grant funding to specifically aid campuses with quick turnaround financial support to meet safety and related needs during this Middle East conflict.
6. Immediately designate an individual to serve as Campus Safety Coordinator and grant them sufficient authority to lead DHS efforts to combat antisemitism and Islamophobia.
7. On a monthly basis, at a minimum, proactively engage school and higher education associations to amplify the ways DHS reaches out to campus leaders who need more support managing the potentially threatening and disruptive actions that are taking place during this Middle Eastern conflict.
8. To support the safety and inclusion of impacted individuals, DHS should designate Temporary Protected Status and authorize Deferred Enforced Departure for the Palestinian territories and Israel, accompanied by the announcement of Special Student Relief for international students and other campus community members impacted by this conflict.

SECRETARY MAYORKAS: “May I ask one question before I have to jump off? I’m sorry I have to jump off and thank you so much for all the work that went into this. Dr. Shapira, can you repeat the recommendation with respect to Title VI authority?”

DR. SHAPIRA repeated recommendation four, adding that the report contains details and explanations for each of the top-level recommendations.

SECRETARY MAYORKAS: “Thank you all very much.”

MS. SILAS entered the public comment period, noting the Council received no registered public comments. She explained attendees would have up to 90 days after the meeting to submit comments in writing to be included in the meeting record.

CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD asked the Council to share the changes they would like to offer to the final report.

DR. ADELA DE LA TORRE proposed adding a recommendation for DHS to prepare practice guidelines and decision considerations for campuses to consider when they host high-visibility events, like basketball games and football games. She also proposed adding a recommendation for DHS to provide model social media posts to university presidents that enable them to call for calm and raise concerns. Finally, she suggested adding a recommendation for DHS to create a glossary of antisemitic terminology to help university leaders. **CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD** asked Dr. Shapira and Chief Ojeisekhoba whether they agreed with Dr. de la Torre’s proposed changes or had any feedback. **CHIEF OJEISEKHOPA** said the suggestions were well taken and that he and Dr. Shapira would work with HSAPC staff to reconcile them in the report. **DR. SHAPIRA** agreed, noting that in some cases incorporating the proposed changes would mean amplifying or adding to the detail that already exists in the recommendations.

CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD asked Traci Silas whether changes were being made to the document, so the group could vote on the final report after deliberations. **MS. SILAS** confirmed the changes were being made.

DR. ANTONIO R. FLORES thanked the Subcommittee for creating an excellent report. He said that while the task at hand focused on the Middle East conflict, tensions are widespread and complex. Dr. Flores suggested that the Council investigate broader questions in addition to the discrete focus on the situation in the Middle East. He also proposed recommending that DHS connect with the assistant secretaries responsible for higher education and K-12 education at the Department of Education, because some of the recommendations involve development of curricular content at both levels of education. **CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD** thanked Dr. Flores for his comments and explained the 14-day tasking led the Subcommittee to a clear focus. Chair Villanueva Beard noted she saw recommendations about engaging other offices in the report and that those recommendations would be made clear in the final report. She invited Chief Ojeisekhoba and Dr. Shapira to respond to Dr. Flores's suggestions. **CHIEF OJEISEKHOB**A explained it was challenging to confine the report to the Middle East conflict, since there are many issues that extend beyond those parameters. He said the recommendation to involve the Department of Education is infused in the report. **DR. SHAPIRA** emphasized that the letter to the Secretary included in the report addresses the issue of coordinating with the Department of Education. Dr. Shapira said she expects the report's recommendations will be helpful in addressing endemic and longer-term issues, too.

CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD asked the members if they would like to offer any other specific edits to the report and called on Dr. Tamarah Pfeiffer.

DR. TAMARAH PFEIFFER thanked Chair Villanueva Beard, Dr. Shapira, Chief Ojeisekhoba, and the Subcommittee. Dr. Pfeiffer proposed adding a sub-recommendation under recommendation six for DHS to ensure that alignment of language is within the emergency response plan for a school site. **CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD** thanked Dr. Pfeiffer and asked Dr. Shapira if she would like to respond. **DR. SHAPIRA** said it was a good comment. **CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD** said the suggestion would be added.

SUZANNE ELISE WALSH proposed adding a recommendation for DHS to host a webinar within 14 days to explain the recommended new tools to target audiences. President Walsh proposed clarifying the focus of recommendation five to pinpoint the need to streamline and ease emergency grant funding processes, so people can access resources more quickly. **DR. SHAPIRA** said she agreed and explained that that was the point of the recommendation.

CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD asked Traci Silas whether changes were being made to the report. **MS. SILAS** asked the HSAPC staff to display the edits being made to the report. HSAPC staff displayed the report in the Zoom meeting. **CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD** asked members to speak up if their changes were not reflected correctly in the document. **DR. DE LA TORRE** said she could not see one of her suggested comments. Dr. de la Torre repeated her proposed recommendation for DHS to prepare practical guidelines and decision considerations for preparing for and responding to high-visibility events on or off campus.

CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD asked Dr. de la Torre whether her point was now captured. **DR. DE LA TORRE** confirmed it was.

CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD asked if members had any other proposed changes or additions. **DR. DE LA TORRE** said a lack of understanding of antisemitic language caused hesitancy among university presidents in their responsiveness to protests. Dr. de la Torre repeated her recommendation for DHS staff to prepare a glossary of antisemitic terms to inform campus leaders. **CHIEF OJEISEKHOB**A said the Subcommittee discussed centralizing information for university presidents' offices, campus public safety, and other stakeholders, so they all have the same information.

CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD thanked Chief Ojeisekhoba and asked whether members had any other comments or suggestions. No members raised their hands. Chair Villanueva Beard thanked the Council for their proposed changes and asked if anyone would like to motion to accept the report as final. **DR. SHAPIRA** motioned to accept the report as final. **DR. FLORES** seconded the motion. The report passed by a unanimous vote. **CHAIR VILLANUEVA BEARD** thanked the Subcommittee co-chairs and members for their work.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY BRENDA ABDELALL thanked the Subcommittee and reiterated appreciation for their time and dedication on behalf of Secretary Mayorkas. She also acknowledged the Secretary's opening remarks, recognizing it was an extraordinarily difficult time for the members to ensure the safety and security of their students and staff. Assistant Secretary Abdelall congratulated the members on providing their first set of formal recommendations to the Secretary. She emphasized that the Department would work expeditiously to implement the Council's recommendations across DHS and with relevant interagency partners.

Meeting was adjourned.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Signed and Dated

Eisa Villanueva Beard Digitally signed by Eisa Villanueva Beard
Date: 2024.01.23 06:28:47 -06'00'

Elisa Villanueva Beard, Chair, Homeland Security Academic Partnership Council