



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



Resources and Information for Faith and Community Leaders Regarding the Israel – Hamas Conflict

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The U.S. remains in a heightened threat environment and recent events reinforce that. As the Israel-Hamas conflict continues, we have seen an increase in reports of threats against Jewish, Muslim, and Arab communities and institutions. Lone offenders, motivated by a range of violent ideologies, pose the most likely threat. We urge the public to stay vigilant and to promptly report suspicious activity to local law enforcement.

DHS is closely monitoring unfolding events and will continue to engage in information sharing with our homeland security partners at home and abroad. We, along with our partners at all levels of government, will continue to help communities prepare for and respond to a range of public safety challenges and are working tirelessly on this mission, which has never been more important. Below are a variety of DHS resources that may be helpful to organizations:

- [Resources for Community Organizations and Service Providers](#)
Training and course offerings, services, and funding resources for community organizations to address targeted violence.
- [Security and Resilience Resources for At-Risk Communities](#)
Provides a range of physical security and community resources, including PSAs, Faith-Based/Houses of Worship, School Safety, and broader counterterrorism/targeted violence programs related to at-risk communities and soft targets/publicly accessible locations.
- [Protecting Houses of Worship Landing Page](#)
This webpage is a first stop shop for guidance and resources to inform Faith-based organizations and places of worship on security-based decisions. Included on this page are numerous resources, which provide building blocks for effective safety and security programs. The resources include a self-assessment tool, trainings, exercises, and other materials focused on a wide range of man-made threats (e.g., bombing, active shooter, vehicle ramming, etc.) that could be used against communities.
- [Protecting Places of Worship: Six Steps to Enhance Security Against Targeted Violence](#)
This document outlines actions that faith-based organizations and community leaders can take to increase security. These six steps can help protect places of worship against potential threats of targeted violence in a cost-effective manner that maintains an open and welcoming environment.
- [Protecting Places of Worship: Perimeter Security Considerations](#)
This infographic outlines low-to-no cost solutions to help implement these suggested practices and highlights ways to identify funding for security improvements.

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- [Immigration Relief in Emergencies or Unforeseen Circumstances | USCIS](#)
Unforeseen circumstances, such as natural catastrophes (hurricanes, wildfires, severe weather, etc.), national emergencies (public health emergencies), or severe illness (including COVID), can sometimes affect the processing of your USCIS application, petition, or immigration request.
- [Allied Against Hate: A Toolkit for Faith Communities](#)
This toolkit describes practical steps faith communities can take to prevent acts of hate, discrimination, and bias, and to demonstrate solidarity with targeted communities if such acts tragically do occur.
- ["If You See Something, Say Something"® Campaign Resources](#)
This national public awareness campaign offers free materials (posters, social media graphics, videos, etc.) to help community leaders, public safety officials, and faith-based organizations/places of worship encourage community members to immediately report signs of suspicious activity to local authorities and help prevent terrorism-related incidents.
- [Prevention Resource Finder](#)
The Prevention Resource Finder provides stakeholders with information on the resources needed to help prepare for and prevent targeted violence and terrorism across our country. Government-wide resources on the website include community support resources; grant funding opportunities; information-sharing platforms; evidence-based research; and training opportunities for communities to reduce the risk of targeted violence, including hate-based targeted violence.

CRCL Officer Presents to United Nations Human Rights Committee

This month, CRCL Officer Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia, along with Senior Counselor to the Secretary Royce Bernstein Murray and Family Reunification Task Force Executive Director Michelle Brané, traveled to Geneva, Switzerland to represent DHS before the United Nations (U.N.) Human Rights Committee (HRC). The three DHS leaders were part of the [U.S. delegation that presented to the HRC](#) on U.S. compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a core international human rights treaty that the U.S. has ratified. While in Geneva, they also participated in an in-person civil society consultation where U.S. government representatives responded to questions and concerns related to the treaty raised by community stakeholders.



U.S. Delegation to the Human Rights Committee on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

The U.S. government delegation was led by Ambassador to the U.N. Human Rights Council Michèle Taylor and included Special Assistant to the President for Democracy and Civil Participation Justin Vail; Senior Director for Multilateral Affairs for the National Security Council Joshua Black; Attorney General for the State of Nevada Aaron Ford; and Mayor of Montgomery, Alabama, Steven Reed. There were additional representatives from the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Defense, and U.S. Department of the Interior.

During the presentation and civil society consultation, DHS's representatives responded to various questions on topics including: efforts to reunify separated families, responses to hate crimes and domestic violent extremism, screening standards for those subject to the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways Rule, and detention oversight, among others.

CRCL Employees Recognized at 2023 DHS Secretary's Awards Ceremony

This month, several CRCL staff members were recognized at the 2023 Secretary's Awards. These prestigious awards honor the work, sacrifice, and professional excellence of DHS employees from Components across DHS. Awardees have performed above and beyond the call of duty, responding in amazing ways to the challenges of protecting the homeland. These individuals have displayed a special dedication to the mission of homeland security, setting a great example for all DHS employees who share their commitment to the Department and to the American public. CRCL staff members were recognized for their outstanding contributions to DHS in the following categories.

Champion of Equity Award for the DHS Equity Task Force Leadership Team

The Secretary's Champion of Equity Award recognizes an employee who has excelled in efforts to promote diversity at DHS through outstanding leadership and innovation. It may acknowledge individual efforts exclusively within DHS or with external partners who assist DHS in meeting our commitment to diversity.

Meritorious Service Silver Medal to the Migrant Protection Protocols Team

The Secretary's Meritorious Service Silver Medal Award is the second highest award presented by the Secretary and recognizes outstanding leadership, superior public service, or unusually significant contributions to strengthening homeland security.

DHS Participates in 2023 National HBCU Week Conference

Last month, CRCL was pleased to participate in the 2023 National Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Week Conference, which took place in person in Arlington, VA. The four-day event brought together over 3,000 representatives from HBCUs, federal agencies, the private sector, and philanthropic organizations to exchange information, share innovations, and promote government engagement at HBCUs across the country.



This year's theme, *Raising the Bar: Forging Excellence through Innovation & Leadership*, featured workshops, engagements, keynote addresses, and interactive exhibits to connect federal and private sector resources to the HBCU community. DHS representatives from several Components and HQ offices participated in multiple events, including opening remarks from DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas during the September 27 luncheon. Other highlights throughout the week included:

- **WHI HBCU Campus Safety and Resilience Cluster Open House:** The Open House provided an opportunity for attendees to learn about the work being led by the Campus Safety and Resilience Cluster under Cluster Lead, Michelle McGriff, CRCL. Attendees included representatives from the following HBCUs: Dillard University, Coppin State, Alabama A&M University, St. Augustine University, and Florida A&M University. DHS was represented by CRCL, the Office for State and Local Law Enforcement, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Representatives from the U.S. Department of Education; the U.S. Department of Justice; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation also participated in the Open House.
- **Journey Across the Federal Government Federal Agency Meet & Greet:** The Meet & Greet offered participants an opportunity to learn about current programs in DHS along with initiatives underway to advance educational equity, excellence, and economic opportunity in partnership with HBCUs at over 30 federal agencies. DHS representatives from CRCL, FEMA, and the Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) shared information about activities taking place within their organizations.
- **HBCUs and Business: Raising the Bar Closing Luncheon:** Opening remarks provided by DHS Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.
- **Panel - *Double Edge Sword: The Effect of Climate Change on Health Equity and Emergency Preparedness*:** Panelists discussed emerging disasters caused by climate change and new strategies required to address emergency preparedness and health equity. Panelists included:
 - Ashley Harrigan, DHS Cyber, Infrastructure, Risk and Resilience Policy
 - Dr. Jamechia Hoyle, DHS Office of Health Security
 - Dr. Goulda Downer, Howard University College of Medicine
 - Panel Moderator: Michelle McGriff, DHS CRCL
- **Panel - *The Future of Cyber Resilience- How HBCUs Can Change the Game*:** Panelists discussed how scientific and technological challenges and opportunities in cybersecurity will change the way we use advanced technologies securely to enable future homeland security and federal government missions. Panelists included:
 - Wallicia Tapscott, DHS S&T
 - Llauryng Iglehart, DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
 - Patrick Newbold, Social Security Administration
 - Blake Hall, ID.me, Inc.
 - Panel Moderator: Donald Coulter, DHS S&T
- **HBCU Week Conference Career and Recruitment Fair:** DHS had a robust presence at the annual career fair to close out the HBCU Week Conference. Representatives were onsite to meet with job seekers and share information about the Department's diverse mission and career opportunities. DHS representatives joined from CISA; FEMA; the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers; the Office of Intelligence and Analysis; the Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans; the Transportation Security Administration; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services; U.S. Coast Guard; and U.S. Secret Service.

CRCL Releases Updated DHS Guide to Interacting with People Who Have Disabilities

CRCL is pleased to announce the release of the updated [DHS Guide to Interacting with People Who Have Disabilities](#). Under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, DHS has a legal obligation to, among other responsibilities, ensure nondiscrimination in the employment of people with disabilities, provide program access, physical access, effective communication, and reasonable modifications to its policies, procedures, and practices for people with disabilities encountered and served within DHS programs and activities. Key to nondiscrimination is considering communicating respectfully with members of the public who have disabilities. This often includes engaging in an interactive process whereby individuals with disabilities may convey a functional need they may have to participate in DHS programs and activities. This Guide, initially developed in 2013, offers a summary of disability-related myths and facts, guidance on appropriate language, and tips for effectively and respectfully interacting with people who have disabilities. The Guide has been updated to include evolving terminology and other changes occurring within the disability community.

DHS Celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month



Each October, DHS celebrates National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). NDEAM is an opportunity to celebrate the many and varied contributions of DHS employees with disabilities and to educate and showcase supportive, inclusive employment policies and practices. This year's theme, *Advancing Access and Equity*, celebrates the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 a half-century ago and its importance in prohibiting discrimination based on disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, in programs receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment, and in the employment practices of federal contractors.

This month, CRCL hosted a virtual Department-wide event to recognize NDEAM. CRCL Officer Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia provided opening remarks and discussed workforce disability demographics across the Department, noting that while progress has been made in terms of hiring and retaining employees with disabilities, there is still much to do. “We must continue to raise awareness, host programs, trainings, and informational sessions throughout the year to help eliminate potential barriers and encourage hiring, advancing, and retaining individuals with disabilities, said CRCL Officer Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia. “These efforts are not just to meet our agency goals, but to truly create and sustain a diverse and model workplace where all employees are valued and respected and have the tools and resources needed to succeed.”

Participants then heard from guest speaker Marcie Roth, Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer at the World Institute on Disability. Ms. Roth shared her personal and professional experiences as a leader and disability advocate focused on operationalizing accessibility and inclusion as intersectional imperatives for equity, diversity, and global social justice.

Later, representatives from two employee associations at DHS, the DHS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Employee Association and the DHS Disability Alliance, shared information about current initiatives and resources available to employees with disabilities at DHS.

Learn more about the Department's continued efforts to advance and provide equal opportunity and full inclusion for individuals with disabilities by visiting our [Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity page](#) and our [Disability Access page](#).

DHS Celebrates National Hispanic Heritage Month

This month, DHS closed out a month-long celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15-October 15, 2023. CRCL and DHS Adelante hosted a virtual event open to all DHS employees, featuring a panel of DHS leaders who spoke about their experiences rising to leadership within DHS and the Federal Government. The event's theme, "**Todos Somos, Somos Uno: We are All, We are One**" reinforces the diversity inherent within the Hispanic community, as well as the power that comes from being a united community.



"DHS strives to create an inclusive and equitable workforce reflecting the full talents of the country we serve," said CRCL Officer Shoba Sivaprasad Wadhia. "At DHS, our commitment to inclusion is not a once-a-year or a one-month-out-of-the-year commitment – it's an effort we undertake every day. Without a diverse workforce, DHS would be unable to fulfill the full extent of its mission."

During the event, leaders from across DHS participated in a panel discussion on the importance of mentorship at every level of leadership and shared tips and resources for professional growth available to employees across the Department.

CRCL Fosters Local Stakeholder Connections to Federal Partners in Miami

CRCL leads efforts to raise awareness and cultural competency considerations for DHS personnel on a range of topics that affect diverse and faith-based communities. CRCL's Community Engagement section supports this work by facilitating connections and building trust between local stakeholders and DHS partners to support local issue resolution, bolster cultural awareness, and provide critical information to support DHS operations. One such example of this work occurred this month in Miami, as a result of CRCL Community Engagement introducing South Florida Muslim community members to Transportation Security Administration (TSA) leadership at the Miami airport. In response to TSA interest, the Muslim stakeholder organization provided a training on Islam and associated Muslim faith practices to around 100 TSA front-line screening supervisors. During a day-long series of one-hour trainings, TSA staff had the opportunity to directly ask questions and discuss issues that may arise when interacting with Muslim community travelers. Building on CRCL's ongoing community engagement work in Miami to inform best practices in community outreach, the TSA participants and community stakeholder presenters both expressed appreciation for the trainings and agreed to plan future sessions.

CRCL on the Road, October*

Miami, Florida

On October 4, CRCL facilitated a cultural sensitivity training for TSA employees in coordination with a local community stakeholder organization.

Chicago, Illinois

On October 23-24, CRCL presented at workshop on Building Local Violence Prevention and Resilient Communities in Chicago.

New York, New York

On October 17-20, CRCL met with diverse stakeholders in New York City

Austin and San Antonio, Texas

On October 23-24, CRCL conducted an engagement with diverse stakeholders in Austin and San Antonio.

*CRCL's Community Engagement team conducts in-person, virtual, and hybrid engagements with federal, state, local, and civil society stakeholders across the country. We remain available to respond to any stakeholder questions or concerns via email at: CommunityEngagement@hq.dhs.gov.

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@hq.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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