

December 1, 2011

Secretary Janet Napolitano  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Charles K. Edwards  
Acting Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
245 Murray Drive SW, Building 410  
Washington, DC 20528

**Re: TSA Racial Profiling Audit**

Dear Secretary Napolitano and Mr. Edwards:

We, the undersigned organizations, representing diverse communities across the United States, call upon the Department of Homeland Security to promptly undertake a comprehensive publicly-reported audit of the civil rights impact of Transportation Security Administration (TSA) airport screening policies on racial and religious minorities. The time for such an important audit is long overdue.

According to a disturbing news report by KITV-ABC in Hawaii last month, a group of TSA screeners called the “Mexicutioners” by their colleagues deliberately subjected Mexican air travelers to additional questioning and stops at Honolulu International Airport. The allegations are consistent with reports from New Jersey that TSA officers deliberately subjected Mexican and Dominican travelers to extra scrutiny at Newark Airport. Since 2007, Sikh travelers have reported that they are routinely selected for secondary screening at some American airports, even after clearing advanced imaging technology machines without incident.

Prior to your taking office, several of our organizations sent a joint letter to TSA in April 2008 urging adoption of stronger internal controls against racial and religious profiling. Sadly, we did not receive a positive response and therefore proper internal controls against profiling were not put into place. This failure makes it more likely that TSA officers will engage in discriminatory behavior that demeans its victims and undermines our security.

Put simply, we are concerned that the latest reports from Hawaii and New Jersey represent the ‘tip of the iceberg’ and that TSA officers are engaged in a wider pattern or practice of profiling racial and religious minorities instead of focusing on actual criminal behavior. In this context, only an independent, publicly-reported audit can reveal the full extent to which TSA officers are violating civil rights and liberties, wasting taxpayer dollars, and undermining national security.

Instead of issuing boilerplate statements against profiling, TSA needs to take effective action to stop it. We hope you will agree and respectfully request that you meet with our organizational representatives as soon as possible to address our concerns.

Respectfully submitted,

Adhikaar

Alliance for Immigrants Rights & Reform - Michigan

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

American Civil Liberties Union

Arab American Institute

Arab Resource and Organizing Center

Asian American Justice Center, member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice

Asian Law Alliance

Asian Law Caucus

Asian Pacific American Legal Center

Bill of Rights Defense Committee

Blacks in Law Enforcement of America - Washington, DC

Causa Justa :: Just Cause (CJJC)

Center for Financial Privacy and Human Rights

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)

Council on American-Islamic Relations

DRUM - Desis Rising Up & Moving

Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)

Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights (CLUE-CA)

Islamic Networks Group (ING)

Japanese American Citizens League

The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Muslim Advocates

Muslim Progressive Traditionalist Alliance

Muslim Public Affairs Council

NAACP

National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA)

National Center for Transgender Equality

National Council of La Raza (NCLR)

National Network for Arab American Communities (NNAAC)

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

OneAmerica

Rights Working Group

Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund (SALDEF)

Sikh Coalition

South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)

South Asian Network (SAN)

United Sikhs

cc:

Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate

Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. House of Representatives

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Committee on Homeland Security, U.S. House of Representatives

Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Office of Civil Rights and Liberties, Transportation Security Administration