



International Refugee
Assistance Project

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Civil Rights Organizations File Lawsuit Demanding Documents on Government Surveillance of Refugees

(San Francisco, CA) – Today, the [International Refugee Assistance Project](#) (IRAP), Muslim Advocates, and the ACLU Foundation of Northern California filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) lawsuit to compel the release of documents and data pertaining to the surveillance and criminal investigation of refugees in the United States. In February 2019, these groups filed a FOIA request to obtain documents in response to the Trump Administration’s frequent claims that refugees are national security threats and the suggestion that refugees should be under criminal surveillance.

The lawsuit references the Trump Administration’s long record of anti-refugee and anti-immigrant policies and public statements, “beginning with President Trump’s campaign promise to ban refugees and Muslims from entering this country and continuing with his multiple attempts to severely limit and in some instances outright halt refugee admissions,” the lawsuit states. The Administration has used baseless claims that refugees are a threat to national security to justify these discriminatory policies.

The groups filed the FOIA request more than six months ago seeking information about any internal policies or guidelines related to the surveillance and investigation of refugee communities in the United States. To date, the government has not produced any records in response to this request.

“The Trump Administration’s xenophobic rhetoric and policies, including monitoring of refugees and immigrants living in this country has sown fear in the community,” said **Melissa Keaney, Senior Litigation Staff Attorney for IRAP**. “Through this litigation we hope to shed light on government surveillance of refugee communities and demonstrate the pernicious effect these policies are having.”

“President Trump continues to encourage discrimination, hate and violence against refugees and American Muslims,” said **Matt Callahan, Staff Attorney for Muslim Advocates**. “Bigoted policies like the Muslim Ban and the severe crackdown on refugee admissions have had a terrible human toll. The American people deserve to know the truth about this administration’s other efforts to discriminate against refugees.”



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“We hear far too often that refugees seeking to establish new lives here are being investigated based on First Amendment-protected activities, like where they worship and what they read,” said **Sean Riordan, Senior Staff Attorney for the ACLU of Northern California**. “Nobody in America should be treated this way.”

Thomas V. Loran III and Elyssa Romino of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman’s San Francisco office are serving as *pro bono* counsel. “We are honored to have the opportunity to assist IRAP, MA, and the ACLU with this important work and are committed to ensuring visibility into the troubling issue of government surveillance of refugees,” said **Elyssa Romino**.

To view the press release, click [here](#).

The complaint can be found [here](#).

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