

January 6, 2020

Acting Commissioner Mark A. Morgan
U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)
Department of Homeland Security
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20229

Dear Acting Commissioner Morgan,

We write to obtain more information regarding the holding of Iranian Americans in secondary inspection upon entering the United States in Blaine, Washington on January 4-5, 2020. There have been reports that more than 60 Americans of Iranian descent were held in secondary inspection at length and questioned at the Peace Arch Border Crossing – with up to 200 individuals having been reportedly affected. Some individuals claim to have been held in secondary inspection over 10 hours, and others report they were turned away due to a lack of space. Those held in secondary inspection include U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and people of all ages including the elderly and children. It has been reported that their passports were confiscated, and they were questioned about their political views and allegiances without explanation.

In conversations with individuals who were held in secondary inspection and community groups representing impacted individuals, it has become clear that this additional screening, holding, and questioning was solely reserved for Iranian Americans. State Congressional staff members were told that upon their release, a CBP officer told the Iranian Americans they would recommend not traveling for a while, as they will have to go through this process again, the timing is just bad for them. Iranian Americans were held in secondary inspection for hours, while others were held for shorter time periods.

We are deeply concerned about the experiences of those impacted this past weekend and the potential that this may be the start of a new policy at our borders and airports illegally targeting those of Iranian descent based solely on their religion, ethnicity, or national origin.

Given these reports, we request that you provide us with information to some unanswered questions.

1. Has there been any directive, email, policy, teleconference, or other communication regarding the treatment, processing, questioning, or screening of individuals of Iranian descent? If so, please provide this communication.
2. Please provide data on the minimum, maximum, median, and average processing times, including for those who undergo secondary screening, and population numbers for the current and past fiscal year and those numbers for the date of January 4-5, 2020 for the Peace Arch border crossing in Blaine, Washington broken down by citizenship status and country of origin. Under what circumstances are U.S. citizens sent to secondary processing?
3. How does CBP determine Iranian heritage of a U.S. citizen? Are any questions ever asked related to a U.S. citizen's religion, ethnicity, or national origin?
4. If and when an individual is sent to secondary processing, how does CBP determine that secondary processing is complete and release an individual? Is this policy consistent regardless of country of origin? Have there been any changes to this policy since January 1, 2020?
5. CBP has stated that long delays on January 4, 2020 were due to low staffing and the late hour; however, people reported being held in secondary inspection for up to twelve hours beginning as

early as 8:00am that day. Were the reported staffing problems throughout the day or only in the evening? Further, please provide an explanation for the extended length of time in secondary inspection during the day.

6. How has staffing at the Peace Arch Point border crossing changed over the last three years? If overall staff has increased, why is the border crossing understaffed at certain hours?
7. CBP has refuted reports that individuals were held in secondary inspection based on national origin; however, multiple people report that only individuals of Iranian descent were subject to long-term holding in secondary inspection at the Peace Arch border crossing in Blaine, Washington on January 4, 2020. Please provide an explanation as to why individuals of Iranian American descent were subject to secondary processing and held between three and twelve hours during this time.
8. Were any individuals not allowed entry into the United States after secondary processing between January 3-5, 2020? What was the basis for their denial and were any of these individual of Iranian descent? This information can be transmitted in classified form if necessary.

Men, women and children legally entering or returning to the United States at a designated port of entry deserve better than to be arbitrarily held and questioned solely based on their religion, ethnicity, or national origin.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

Suzan K. DelBene
Member of Congress

Patty Murray
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Maria Cantwell
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Donald Payne
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy
Member of Congress

Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

Gilbert Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Katie Porter
Member of Congress

Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle
Member of Congress

Jim Himes
Member of Congress

Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

Dean Phillips
Member of Congress

Derek Kilmer
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Sharice L. Davids
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

Sylvia R. Garcia
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

Pater A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

André Carson
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Marc Veasey
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Watson Coleman
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Norma Torres
Member of Congress

Denny Heck
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Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
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David E. Price
Member of Congress

Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress