

SAALT Community Alert: New Airport Screening Policies

April 2, 2010- South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) welcomes the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) announcement, made earlier today, to rescind a misguided policy issued in January 2010, which applied enhanced security screening for passengers traveling from 14 predominantly Muslim-majority countries, including Pakistan, to the United States. After its implementation, SAALT had expressed serious concerns about the policy's reliance upon nationality and country of origin as triggers for heightened security procedures, and its disproportionate impact on community members of Arab, Muslim and South Asian descent.

On April 2, 2010, DHS announced that new security protocols will supersede the 14-country directive. According to DHS, this new system will be based on specific threat-based intelligence information, and will be applied to all passengers traveling to the United States.

SEE: [DHS Release on New Screening Procedure](#)

"The new policy announced today is a step in the right direction, and we call upon the Transportation Security Administration to apply it in a neutral and nondiscriminatory manner," said Deepa Iyer, Executive Director of SAALT. "Targeting travelers simply based on their national origin, as the previous directive did, resulted in profiling, civil rights violations, and the diversion of critical resources that our country needs to identify genuine threats to security."

SEE: [US Changing the Way Air Travelers are Screened](#) (Washington Post), [Security Check System for Flights to US to Be Altered](#) (New York Times)

By way of background, on January 3, 2010, the Transportation Security Administration implemented a policy that required all passengers traveling to the United States from 14 countries to undergo full-body pat-downs and inspection of carry-on luggage before boarding a plane in response to the attempted 2009 Christmas Day attack. These procedures only applied to individuals who either held a passport or traveled from or through the following countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen.

Subsequently, SAALT, along with numerous Arab, Muslim, Sikh, and South Asian organizations, expressed serious concerns about the impact of the policy, and engaged in extensive advocacy with DHS to call for its withdrawal. As details emerge about the parameters of the new measures, SAALT will continue to provide information to the community and to monitor their application.

Resources and Past Statements Regarding the 14-Country Directive and Profiling:

- ["What You Need to Know About New Airline Screening Standards"](#) developed by SAALT (January 2010)
- ["Letter to the Department of Homeland Security About New TSA Screening Standards"](#) (January 2010)
- ["South Asian Organizations Express Concern About New Security Screening Standards"](#) (January 2010)
- [Additional SAALT Resources on Racial and Religious Profiling](#)

For additional information, contact SAALT at info@saalt.org.



[South Asian Americans Leading Together \(SAALT\)](#) is a national, nonpartisan, non-profit organization that elevates the voices and perspectives of South Asian individuals and organizations to build a more just and inclusive society in the United States. SAALT is the coordinating entity of the [National Coalition of South Asian Organizations \(NCSO\)](#), a network of 39 organizations that serve, organize, and advocate on behalf of the South Asian community across the country.