**Minutes of the San Diego Refugee Forum Meeting**

Date: Tuesday, March 15. 2022

Location: Zoom meeting

Time: 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Attendees:

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| 1619240---- |
| 1619770---- |
| Ailaa Al-Tabatabaee, Somali Family Service |
| Angela Molina, Office of Cong. Sara Jacobs |
| Anne Fosselman, El Cajon Valley HS Community Ctr |
| Bethlehem Wolkeba, JFS Breaking Down Barriers  |
| Bob Walsh, SDRF Secretary |
| Brett Hall, CHIP Comm. Health Improvement Program, SD County Suicide Prevention Council |
| Carol Crisp, PCG |
| Carol Lewis, El Cajon Collaborative |
| Chelsea Hill, Nile Sisters |
| Chris Baca, JFS |
| Claire Enemark, United Women of East Africa, SD Refugee Communities Coalition |
| Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Dan Nyamangah, Crawford Community Connection SAY San Diego |
| Diane Landino, Office of Refugee Resettlement |
| Eddie Robles, Aetna |
| Edith Sanchez Cruz, Sherrif’s Dept |
| Elmer David, SD Unified SD |
| Farhat Popal, City SD Immigrant Affairs Mgr |
| Graciela Mendoza, CA Dept of Public Health, Binational Border Health |
| Hassan Abdirahman, Somali Family Service |
| Hawi Abdulkadir, Somali Family Service |
| Iliana Salas |
| Irene Elizabeth Garcia, County Child Lead Prevention |
| Ismael Avilez, Casa Cornelia Law Center |
| Jane Hoey, Women's Empowerment Intl  |
| Jane Register, World Relief SoCal |
| Janelle Acosta, License to Freedom |
| Jean Saito, First 5 First Steps |
| Joey Beyer, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Juan Estrada, Molina Healthcare, Community Engagement |
| Judy Amaro, PCG |
| Kate Morrissey, SD Union Tribune |
| Kathryn LaPointe, Church of the Brethren shelter |
| Katie Case, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Le’Jeane Ellis |
| Lily Mojdehi, Breaking Down Barriers, Jewish Fam Serv |
| Liz Rosas, Somali Bantu Association |
| Lucy Jasso, San Diego Youth Services |
| Madisen Ferras, COSD CHET |
| Mahvash Alami, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Martha Salmeron, Crawford Community Connection SAY San Diego |
| Marwah Alobaidi, USAHello |
| Mary Joy Cunningham, IRC MSW Intern |
| Maryam Abdul-Sattar |
| Maureen Hartin, Volunteers in Medicine |
| Melissa Lindo, UPAC Teen Recovery Center |
| Monique Myers, DA’s Office |
| Moyosore Buari, United Women of East Africa, SD Refugee Communities Coalition |
| Nasser Mohieddin, SDSU |
| Navid Zamani, License to Freedom |
| Nazira Adieva, County Office of Equitable Communities CAP |
| Officer Homayoun Nabizadeh, SDPD Comm. Relations |
| Osvaldo Alcazar Pulido, United Health Care |
| Rahmo Abdi, PANA |
| Rita Shamoon, CALWORKS job developer |
| Rose Pelligrini, Safe Families for Children |
| Scott Williford, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Sherry Naum, Home-Start |
| Tammy Burmeister, SDC Child Welfare Services, East |
| Tania Rivera, IRC Emergency Resources Coordinator |
| Tsigealem Birhane, United Women of East Africa |
| Winona Baetiong, Survivors of Torture Intl |
| Zach Shilling |

**Meeting facilitator**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair

**1. Greeting and introduction of attendees** Hassan Abdirahman, Chair

65 attending, including 17 new

**2. Treasurer’s report** Carol Lewis, Treasurer

We currently have 9 paid members for 2022. We’re running behind our member total for last year. It’s time to be sending in membership dues to become a paid member of the Forum for this calendar year. Members are eligible to vote in Forum elections and to run for office. Dues provide funds for Task Forces and our World Refugee Day event.

This year we are making it easier to join by once again offering the option of mailing in a check (see membership form at website). You can also pay online through Paypal on the SDRF website <http://www.sdrefugeeforum.org/members.html>

You can send checks to me: Carol Lewis, Little House Family Resources, 131 Avocado Ave., El Cajon CA 92020. $35 annually for individuals/small agencies and $70 for organizations. Membership forms can be found online at http://www.sdrefugeeforum.org/

Carol can provide an invoice if you want one. Contact Carol at carol.lewis@elcajoncollaborative.org

**3. Resettlement updates**  Abdi Abdillahi, County Refugee Coordinator

For the month of February 2022, San Diego County resettled a total of 409.

* Primary Refugees (not including the Afghans) = 52

* Cuban/Haitian = 45
* Asylee = 1

* Total Afghans for February 2022 = 311

* + Afghans with refugee status = 57

* + Afghans with SIV status = 12

* + Afghans with Humanitarian Parolee (HP) status = 242
* 305 out of the total 409 (or 75%) for February 2022 are number of individuals eligible for CalWORKs including children.

* 104 out of the total 409 (or 25%) for February 2022 are number of single adults/couples with no children under 18 eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).



For the FFY 21/22 (October 1, 2021 through February 28, 2022), San Diego County resettled a total of 2,980.

* Primary Refugee (not including the Afghans) = 137
* Secondary Immigration (refugees that resettled in another county and moved to San Diego) = 5
* Asylee = 5
* Iraqi with SIV status = 4
* Cuban/Haitians = 373
* Total Afghans for FFY 2021/2022 (October 1, 2021 through February 28, 2022) = 2,456

* + Afghans with refugee status = 330
	+ Afghans with SIV status = 43
	+ Afghans with Special Immigrant Parolee (SIP) status = 131
	+ Afghans with Humanitarian Parolee (HP) status = 1,952
* 1,952 or 79% out of the total Afghans 2,456 that resettled in San Diego County for FFY 21/22 (October 2021 through February 2022) are Afghans with Humanitarian Parolees (HPs).
* 2,412 out of the total arrivals 2,980 (or 81%) for FFY 2021/2022 are number of individuals eligible for CalWORKs including children.
* 568 out of the total arrivals 2,980 (or 19%) are number of single adults/couples with no children under 18 years eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA).

For more details, see the County Arrivals Report for February 2022 uploaded on the SDRF website.

**4. Task force updates** Task Force Chairs/representatives

Employment

Carol Crisp reported:

The task force met March 9. Plans for a Refugee Career Fair are moving ahead. The date is set for Tuesday, May 10. It will be an in-person event, with the possibility of having a virtual component. It will be held at Grossmont College, outdoors. They are expecting 12 to 18 employers. The group is working on logistics and on publicizing the event.

If you have any employers that would like to participate in the Welcoming Refugee Job Fair please reach out to Carol Crisp ccrisp@pcgus.com

Domestic Violence

Navid Zamani. License to Freeedom, reported:

They are looking at working with incoming refugees and entrants to try to get ahead of the domestic violence issue through orientation and outreach.

Nowruz New Year is coming up March 21, which is a big event for Iranians, Afghans and others from the Middle East.

Mental Health

Claire Enemark reported:

The Mental Health Task Force will be making today’s presentation on mental health issues for refugees, asylum seekers , and the new Afghan arrivals.

The group is still working on a survey to create a map of mental health service providers who are culturally qualified, including for newly arrived asylees. Please help the task force identify qualified people.

Culturally Qualified Mental Health Providers Survey: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UvK1-s5zPU-vwLTWlV5JSZ2\_onwb\_1tKg0dDvHKvMpFURFdTV09FRlpPNjlXSjZFTVExRjlMN1FZUy4u

World Refugee Day Committee

Hassan called for volunteers to get started with planning this event, which takes place annually in June. Two people volunteered: Officer Homayoun Nabizadeh and Lucy Jasso. An early decision will be whether to hold an in-person, virtual or hybrid event.

**5. Presentation: Mental Health Issues for Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Afghan Arrivals** SDRF Mental Health Task Force; Dr. Mahvash Alami and Winona Baetiong of Survivors of Torture, Intl

Winona began the presentation with a look at mental health issues for refugees and other newcomers, including how the individuals themselves feel about their situation, and signs and symptoms. Somatic presentations can be associated with stigma. They can lead to perceptions of less separation in what people view as mental and physical health in terms of what people feel is going on with them.

Mahvash addressed issues for the Afghan newcomers specifically, identifying the causes for their multiple trauma:
- the need to flee, plus leaving family behind

- the chaotic nature of the evacuation, and the uncertainty of their situation

- the challenges of resettling in a new country.

She mentioned the different views on families, relationships, roles, and conflict resolution in Afghanistan and U.S., as well as domestic violence. There the family is collectivist vs. nuclear; people have the whole family for support. Here they can feel lonely and isolated because the are separated from the larger family.

Families are patriarchal, the father gives the orders. Wives defer to their husband. Father is the provider, which can be difficult to fulfill here, with barriers to jobs such as language. There are also instances of multiple wives and children/families.

They finished with a clinical look at approaches to mental health interventions.

See the attached PowerPoint “Mental Health Presentation”.

Claire Enemark of the Mental Health Task Force and United Women of East Africa and the San Diego Refugee Communities Coalition then presented a different approach to dealing with mental health issues, a community approach. Even non-professionals can interface with refugees to help, drawing on their own experience. UWEAST has a Crisis Counseling Program that is peer-based.

Common mental health issues among refugees include anxiety, depression, PTSD, and suicidal thoughts and feelings. She outlined barriers to dealing with mental health issues: stigma, reliance on religion, language barrier, and the compounding factors of discrimination, past trauma and unfamiliarity with systems of care. Also concerns about confidentiality.

Active listening is a useful approach to helping, to help people open up about their feelings. Also acknowledging that the real difficulties and stressors they face impact their mental health. Focus on prevention, addressing mental health concerns and referring out before they escalate.

The CalHOPE Crisis Counseling Center has 25 counselors that provide non-clinical counseling support and resource navigation, and provides support groups for refugees, asylum seekers and new immigrants. Help is available in 16 languages.

Other resources include License to Freedom and Jewish Family Service Breaking Down Barriers, as well as the San Diego Access and Crisis Line.

See the attached PowerPoint “Community Based Approach to Supporting the Mental Health of Refugee and Asylum Seeker Community Members”.

Winona gave a brief overview of the services provided by Survivors of Torture International.

See <https://notorture.org/client-services/>

Navid Zamani of License to Freedom outlined LTF services. See the information flyer (attached) on their range of services, which include free legal support and housing support in addition to support around domestic violence.

The presenters requested everyone’s help in compiling a list of culturally qualified mental health counselors by completing the survey at:

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=UvK1-s5zPU-vwLTWlV5JSZ2\_onwb\_1tKg0dDvHKvMpFURFdTV09FRlpPNjlXSjZFTVExRjlMN1FZUy4u&wdLOR=cC8E90267-E11D-4FEE-8E2F-927ED92ACBFD

**6. Community announcements**

Tsigealem Birhane, United Women of East Africa

We have a program called Baking Connection where we bake and talk about mental health. Our main target are women of Eastern Africa. Please share our flyers and contact information. Thank you.

tsigedesbele@gmail.com

Officer Homayoun Nabizadeh

House of Palestine lawn event in Balboa Park 3-20-22 1100-1700

2 Persian New Year events, Nowrouz, 03-27-22. One is hosted by House of Iran at Balboa Park, the other by Shoaib Azizi at Seaport Village.

Lily Mojdehi, Jewish Family Service, Breaking Down Barriers

Arab Film Festival is happening now :)https://sandiegoaff.org/

Clint Carney, Survivors of Torture, Int'l

Migrant Voices event at San Diego Latino Film Festival. https://sdlatinofilm.com/

Chris Baca, Jewish Family Service

JFS is expanding its services to asylees. Refer clients to us, we do case management.

Nasser Mohieddin, SDSU

I am working for Iraqis in El Cajon, on a festival to raise awareness of the presence of refugees in El Cajon. Trying to promote and support their businesses.

Navid Zamani, License to Freedom

1. License to Freedom offers free psychological evaluations for Middle Eastern refugees navigating VAWA and asylum.

2. One Safe Place in North County opens up in the first week of May and has 55 partners that have joined so far.

Brett Hall, Community Health Improvement Partners and San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council

The San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council Monthly Meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 22nd from 10:00 am-11:30 am via Zoom. Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86245631916?pwd=Z0h2TEtndFY0Mno5M1QzdGp4eWU3dz09 Meeting ID: 862 4563 1916, Passcode: spc2022

The CHIP QPR Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper Monthly Training will be held on Friday, March 25th from 10:30am-12:00 pm via Zoom. Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0oc-msqDoqG9ZR0LEiPgJVeEq6Yzy2WC28>

Liz Rosas, Somali Bantu Association of America to Everyone 11:47 AM

SBAOA has a program that pays for refugees to open a day care business.

**7. Approval of the minutes of the February 2022 meeting** Bob Walsh, Secretary

The minutes were approved.

**Adjournment**: Hassan Abdirahman, Chair, 11:50 a.m.

**Next Meeting**: April 19, 2022

Minutes recorded by Bob Walsh, Secretary