

Slide 1

**How the U.S. Department of State Can Help U.S. Citizens Residing or Traveling Abroad in Personal Crisis**

*Janine Gannon, Attorney Advisor  
Margery Gehan, Victim Assistance Specialist  
Sylvia Hammond, Citizen Services Specialist*



Webinar hosted by:

 <b>TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER</b> <small>Center for Women, Children and the Family Rights</small>	Heather Heiman Senior Public Policy Attorney Heather@tahirih.org	Jeanne Smoot Director of Public Policy jeanne@tahirih.org
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Slide 2

**Tahirih's Forced Marriage Initiative**

In 2011, Tahirih launched the:

- **Forced Marriage Initiative**
- **National Network to Prevent Forced Marriage**

in response to the findings of Tahirih's Survey on Forced Marriage in Immigrant Communities in the United States.

This webinar is part of a quarterly series.



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Slide 3



**Department of State  
Bureau of Consular Affairs  
Overseas Citizens Services**

*Margery Gehan, Victim Assistance Specialist  
Sylvia Hammond, Citizens Services Specialist  
Janine Gannon, Attorney Advisor*

U.S. Department of State • Bureau of Consular Affairs



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Slide 4

 **Agenda**

- U.S. Citizens Traveling Abroad
- Department Roles and Priorities
- Crime Victim Assistance
- Promoting Safety Abroad and Outreach
- Issues in Domestic Violence and Forced Marriage cases



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Slide 5

 **U.S. Citizens Abroad**

- 65 million trips
- 6.3 million reside overseas
- Over 270,600 students studying abroad



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Slide 6

 **Assistance to U.S. Citizens Abroad**

- Role of Embassies/Consulates
  - Over 270 posts abroad
- Role of Washington, D.C. Office



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Slide 7

 **Our Number One Priority**

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***Safety and Security of  
U.S. citizens abroad***



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Slide 8

 **Overseas Citizens Services Primary Role**

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- Emergency and non-emergency services to U.S. citizens residing or traveling abroad
- Country-Specific Information Sheets, Public Announcements and Travel Warnings
- U.S. nationality and documentation of U.S. citizens
- Information and guidance on the consular aspects of cases involving children.
- Serve as Central Authority – Hague Conventions on Abduction and Adoption



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Slide 9

 **Consular Information Program**

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- Country Specific Information
- Travel Alerts
- Travel Warnings



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Slide 10

 Embassy/Consulate Emergency Message System



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Slide 11

 Consular Information and Travel Resources

[www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov)

Smart Traveler Enrollment Program  
(STEP)



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Slide 12

 Non-Emergency Services

- Citizenship documentation
- Loss of citizenship
- Federal Benefits
- Voting Assistance



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Slide 13

**C** **Emergencies Abroad**

Medical Emergency	Detention
Financial Assistance	Death and Estates
Victims of Crime	Crises
"Welfare and Whereabouts"	



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Slide 14

**C** **Crime Victim Assistance**

Trauma/Challenges from victimization:

- > Far from home
- > Language barriers
- > Local law applies – not U.S. law
- > Crime definitions different in each country



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Slide 15

**C** **Crime Victim Assistance**

Services Department can provide to U.S. citizen victims of crime

- For Consular officers overseas
  - > Accompany (if possible...)
  - > Assist with filing a police report
  - > Explain the criminal justice process
  - > Access Medical Care
  - > Referrals to local resources



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Slide 16

**C** **Crime Victim Assistance**

Services Department can provide to U.S. citizen victims of crime

- For staff in Washington
  - > Provide support to family in the US
  - > Identify resources to assist victims upon return to the US



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Slide 17

**C** **Intercountry Adoption and International Parental Child Abduction**

- Countries party to the Hague Convention
- Non-Hague countries



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Slide 18

**C** **Legal Considerations**

- No Double Standard
- U.S. citizens subject to local law
- Minors
- 2-parent consent required to issue passport for minors (under 16 or with CPIAP request)
  - See 22 CFR 51.28
- Privacy Act



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Slide 19

 **Issues with Domestic Violence**

- Local law
- Exit holds
- Child custody
- Passport issuance
- Parental kidnapping
- Local resources
- Nationality of the perpetrator



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Slide 20

 **Forced Marriage**

- Arranged vs. forced
- Age of victim—minor?
- Direct contact with victim
- Local law and resources
- Nationality of the other spouse



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Slide 21

 **Case Examples**

Case Discussion



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Slide 22

**Consular Affairs Contacts**

- Available 24 hours a day
- Overseas Citizens Services
- Toll Free: 888-407-4747
- [VictimAssistance@state.gov](mailto:VictimAssistance@state.gov)



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Slide 23

**Threat of Imminent Travel and Forced Marriage Abroad**

- The threat may be explicit or only suspected:
  - Individual may not know when/if travel will occur
  - Parents may say upcoming travel is for another reason
- Imminent travel may trigger individual to seek help
- Victim may feel they have no choice – threats against themselves, family members, or others if they do not comply



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Slide 24

**Risks of Going Abroad**

- Difficulty communicating:
  - may not know language/dialect in region
  - limited access to email/internet, phone, and post services
- Passport, ID documents, money may be taken away
- May be taken to remote area – making transport, location by US/local authorities difficult or hazardous
- Lack of protections under law and from local authorities
- Less/no social services, shelters, or support options



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Slide 25

**Assisting Individuals Facing *Imminent Travel Abroad***

- Urge them **NOT** to travel overseas!
- Gather essential information – Name, DOB, passport number, destination address/city/region, name of parents and spouse/relatives visiting, etc.
- Arm the individual with information – Embassy/Consulate (phone/email/text), local NGOs and shelters, 911/law enforcement equivalent
- Essentials: secret cell phone/SIM card; local currency
- Airport contingency and communication plans
- Notify the State Department




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Slide 26

For information on upcoming webinars, and newsletters about forced marriage in the United States, please join the:

**National Network to Prevent Forced Marriage**  
 &  
**Forced Marriage Listserve**

To learn more and sign up, please visit Tahirih's website:  
[www.tahirih.org/advocacy/policy-areas/forced-marriage-initiative/](http://www.tahirih.org/advocacy/policy-areas/forced-marriage-initiative/)

Or contact: [FMI@tahirih.org](mailto:FMI@tahirih.org)




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