

FAQ: Status of DHS Civil Rights Oversight Offices and Litigation Against Their Closure

Updated: June 2025

Q1: What happened to the oversight offices at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS)?

In early 2025, the Trump administration moved to dismantle three key DHS oversight bodies:

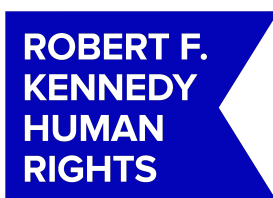
- The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL): Established, in part, to investigate civil rights complaints and ensure that DHS policies respect constitutional and other legal protections.
- The Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman (OIDO): Created to provide independent oversight of immigration detention facilities, addressing complaints and recommending improvements.
- The Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) Ombudsman: Designed to assist individuals and employers in resolving issues with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and to suggest systemic improvements.

The administration issued reduction-in-force (RIF) notices to nearly all staff in these offices and moved to shut down their functions entirely, calling the offices [“internal adversaries”](#) that [“have obstructed immigration enforcement](#) by adding bureaucratic hurdles and undermining DHS’s mission.”

The closures triggered widespread alarm from civil society, legal practitioners, and immigrant rights advocates who rely on these offices to report abuse, address systemic issues, and protect due process rights.

Q2: What was the legal response?

In April 2025, Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, the Urban Justice Center, and the Southern Border Communities Coalition, with representation from Public Citizen, Democracy Forward, and Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights, filed *Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights et al. v. Dep’t of Homeland Sec. et al.*, 1:25-cv-01270 (D.D.C. filed Apr. 24, 2025).



The lawsuit argues that the administration's actions violated the Administrative Procedure Act and the U.S. Constitution by attempting to unilaterally eliminate offices that Congress mandated be created and maintained to provide civil rights oversight of the Department of Homeland Security.

Q3: Did DHS reverse its decision?

Yes—partially. Following legal action and public pressure, DHS publicly confirmed that it will not abolish CRCL, OIDO, or the CIS Ombudsman. The agency updated its public-facing websites to reflect that these offices remain operational and continue to fulfill their statutory mandates.

However, the reality on the ground is different. Each of these offices has been decimated by staffing cuts:

- CRCL: Reduced from approximately 150 to approximately 22 staff
- CIS Ombudsman: From approximately 44 to approximately 8 staff
- OIDO: From approximately 110 to approximately 10 staff

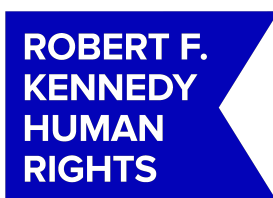
Full-time staff are to be supplemented with detailees, private contractors, and adoption of software programming. The Acting Director of CRCL submitted [a full description of these plans](#) in a sworn declaration to the court.

This severe downsizing raises concerns about the government's capacity to meaningfully investigate complaints, monitor detention conditions, or carry out other statutory functions of the offices.

Q4: Can I still submit complaints to these offices?

Yes. All three offices are still accepting complaints and information from the public.

Practitioners should remain aware that while the offices are operational, current vacancies for staff positions remain open as of this writing in early June 2025. Nonetheless, documenting abuse, filing complaints, and recording responses (or lack thereof) remain a vital tool for holding DHS accountable.



Q5: What is the status of the lawsuit?

The case is ongoing in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. A motion for preliminary injunction remains pending before the court. The court has also ordered periodic status reports from the government to monitor its progress in filling open staff vacancies.

Plaintiffs' counsel continues to monitor whether statutory functions of the offices are being completed. Please contact Karla Gilbride at kgilbride@citizen.org if you have information you think would be helpful to the ongoing litigation, such as updates on complaints you have filed with one of the three offices and any response or lack thereof.

Q6: Where can I learn more or stay updated?

- [RFK Human Rights case page](#)
- [Public Citizen case page](#)
- [Democracy Forward](#)

Legal practitioners who rely on these offices for oversight, client advocacy, or systemic complaints are encouraged to remain engaged and to continue using all available accountability tools.