FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sasha W., NQAPIA Organizing Director, 909-343-2219, sasha@nqapia.org

Over 60 #15YearsLater protesters demand that Jeh Johnson and the Dept. of Homeland Security end legalized profiling of LGBTQ Muslim, South Asian and Black Communities

On the 15th anniversary of September 11th, the National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA) and KhushDC organized a performative action to end 15 years of profiling and policing in LGBTQ Muslim, South Asian and Black communities.

Over 60 protesters took over 14th St and U St NW for over two hours. We demanded that Department of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson end the legalized profiling of our communities. We displayed four large boxes of petitions, with signs reading, “Jeh Johnson: 1000s have spoken. Will you listen?” and “Jeh Johnson, can you hear us now?” The boxes contained thousands of postcards collected earlier that day, and from NQAPIA’s year-long campaign to end legalized profiling. Protesters chanted, “Hey hey, ho ho racial profiling has got to go. State violence has got to go!” “Up up with the people, down down with Jeh Johnson,” and “Black Muslim Lives Matter.”
During the protest, NQAPIA Organizing Director Sasha W. said, “Every time you are stopped going through TSA - that's Jeh Johnson. Every time someone you love is deported - that's Jeh Johnson. Every time you are harassed and called a terrorist - well, that's Jeh Johnson too. Why? Because when you legalize this profiling, when you make it part of the basis of the state, you give everyday people permission to profile and police our communities as well.”

Ahmed Mir, an organizer with KhushDC, said: “We are disappointed with the leadership of Secretary Johnson. How is it still legal to profile someone based on their beliefs, the color of their skin, or their gender identity? How many more innocent brown and black people need to be assaulted by law enforcement before he listens to us?”

Almas Haider, NQAPIA board member, added, “This is the first time I have participated in an action on 9/11. It is the start of our community courageously holding DHS and other U.S. institutions, politicians, and media accountable for post-9/11 policies. We demand an end to the surveillance and profiling of our people, and we will not rest until we achieve it.”

Earlier in the day, 20 people created “checkpoints” in some of the busiest areas of Washington, DC for two hours: Adams Morgan, Columbia Heights, Dupont Circle and 14th and U St.

These checkpoints replicated the kinds of profiling, policing and interrogation that Muslims and those perceived as Muslim go through on a regular basis: at the border, at TSA, in daily life. Organizers stopped people for many of the same reasons that our communities are stopped: wearing a backpack, having a phone in our pocket, or for no reason at all. We then flipped the script, telling people that characteristics such as speaking English, being from Washington, DC, associating themselves with the Christian faith, were indications of “terrorist affiliations.” Organizers then led participants through a debrief, explaining that Muslim, South Asian and Black communities are often policed and profiled based on language, region, religion, and more.

Lakshmi Sridaran, SAALT’s Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, said, “We need to go beyond words and help people get a snapshot of the kind of profiling and surveillance our communities have experienced in the last 15 years. It was powerful to be on the streets to educate white people and also share common experiences with other people of color and people who identify as queer and transgender who experience this profiling on a daily basis.”

**The National Queer Asian Pacific Islander Alliance (NQAPIA) is a federation of LGBTQ Asian American, South Asian, and Pacific Islander (AAPI) organizations. We seek to build the organizational capacity of local LGBTQ AAPI groups, develop leadership, invigorate grassroots organizing, and challenge homophobia and racism.**