

Afghan Officials Visited Second Judicial District Court in Search of Best Practices for Handling Domestic Violence Cases

A delegation from Afghanistan—including a prosecutor and a police officer—visited the Second Judicial District Court in April as part of a trip to learn how U.S. courts handle domestic violence cases.

The group—which also visited courts in Baltimore, Cincinnati and Detroit—hopes to find best practices that they can apply in Afghanistan’s judicial system. Global Ties ABQ, a non-profit organization that works to foster ongoing relationships between Albuquerque residents and international visitors, sponsored the Albuquerque trip.

At the Second Judicial District Court, the Afghan delegation observed a domestic violence hearing and then shared their impressions with the hearing officer, Rosemary Traub, and Family Court Presiding Judge Debra Ramirez over lunch.

Interpreters facilitated the conversation. The prosecutor, Abdul Haq Anabia, said having a judge or hearing officer render a decision in a domestic violence case is a stark contrast from the process in Afghanistan, where all domestic violence such cases are resolved through mediation.

Judge Ramirez said culture plays a role in the different manners in which courts handle domestic violence cases in the U.S. versus Afghanistan.

“In Afghanistan, the focus is always on reuniting the family,” Judge Ramirez said. “In the U.S., even though we like to see families work out their differences and remain together, there are times when we consider it appropriate to draw a line and say reunification is not possible—and that line is when violence is occurring.”

Despite the differing approaches, both the Afghans and their American counterparts agreed their overriding goal is to decrease incidents of domestic violence. Haq Anabia said the mediation process in Afghanistan offers families support to help curb violence.

“Overall, we are trying to decrease violence against women in Afghanistan,” said Gita Qaderi, a female police officer in Kabul.

Qaderi also expressed appreciation for the number of programs in the U.S. that promote awareness of domestic violence and offer services and resources for survivors. “We need to have more programs that build awareness,” she said. “I am hoping to go back and focus on such programs.”