

With Trust Lacking in Law Enforcement, Feds Do This

U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder will announce on Monday revisions to federal law enforcement guidelines that are designed to limit profiling and set an example for local police, according to a Justice Department official.

The new rules expand upon guidelines issued in 2003 under the Bush administration that prevented profiling based on race or ethnicity to now include gender, national origin, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

A special carve-out was made, however, for certain agencies under U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

The announcement comes after weeks of racially-charged protests following two state grand jury decisions not to indict local police officers over fatal incidents involving black men in Ferguson, Missouri and New York.

Holder will lead a conference call with local law enforcement leaders on Monday to encourage them to adopt the federal guidelines, the Justice Department official said.

Holder, who has said he will leave his post early next year, is adamant about making improved race relations a major part of his legacy. He has recently pressed for the guidelines to be expanded by the time he leaves office, the Justice Department official said.

"Particularly in light of certain recent incidents we've seen at the local level and the widespread concerns about trust in the criminal justice process which so many have raised throughout the nation, it's imperative that we take every possible action to institute strong and sound policing practices," Holder said in a statement.

The revised guidance closes an earlier loophole provided for

any federal law enforcement activity that could fall under the purpose of national security. Now only certain Department of Homeland security agents will receive that cover.

Those screening travelers at airports, guarding U.S. borders and protecting national leaders in the Secret Service will be exempted from the guidelines.

The American Civil Liberties Union said these exceptions mean the national security loophole is not sufficiently closed.

The ACLU's Washington legislative director Laura Murphy said the exceptions are "distressing, particularly because Latinos and religious minorities are disproportionately affected."

The Department of Homeland Security said in a fact sheet that the exceptions were made because of the unique nature of the agency's mission, "most notably in protecting our borders and securing our skies."

The Justice Department will formally announce the new guidelines through a memo to be published at an unknown time on Monday.

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