



**INDEPENDENT**

## **Donald Trump 'to launch controversial National Vetting Centre' to control immigration**

Alexandra Wilts and Mythili Sampathkumar

February 7, 2018

US President Donald Trump is launching a new “National Vetting Centre” with the aim of increasing checks on visitors to the US.

A memo being signed by the President will give the Department of Homeland Security and other agencies six months to establish the facility, which is aimed at improving communication between different federal bodies and implement what the President has called “extreme vetting”.

It is not clear how it will affect the way visitors and immigrants are assessed when they enter the country but during the presidential campaign vowed he would tighten regulations that activists say are already incredibly script.

The centre will not require any new funding and no new authority will be established, according to CNN.

An official told the network the centre would focus on individuals inside the US, including those who were subject to deportation proceedings, as well as visitors.

A privacy and civil liberties panel to oversee the new centre’s activities is also supposed to be established.

Mr Trump has prioritised immigration reform since entering the White House. He had called for “extreme vetting” while on the presidential campaign trail, claiming that current immigration controls and investigations of people’s backgrounds do not go far enough to control influx.

Trump during election campaign: “The truth is, our immigration system is worse than anyone ever realised”

After becoming president, he has scaled back and toughened refugee admissions. He has also worked to severely restrict travel and immigration from certain Muslim-majority countries through the controversial travel ban that he issued during his first week in office in 2017, which triggered thousands of protests at US airports.

The order has since been revised twice following objections from federal district courts, which called it unconstitutional since it discriminated on the basis of religion. According to the third version of the travel ban that the Supreme Court allowed to go into effect in December, most citizens of Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad and North Korea will be barred from entering the US, along with some groups of people from Venezuela.

Critics argue those policies are inhumane or discriminatory, pointing out that the refugee admissions process already involved thorough vetting.

The US leader ramped up his rhetoric in the aftermath of a number of terrorist attacks.

After a truck was used to mow down pedestrians in New York November 2017, Mr Trump tweeted: “I have just ordered Homeland Security to step up our already Extreme Vetting Programme. Being politically correct is fine, but not for this!”

Deepa Iyer, a civil rights activist and author of *We Too, Sing America* told *The Independent* the centre is “just another tool for this administration to profile, target, and discriminate against brown and black immigrants.”

Ms Iyer said it was “part and parcel” of the administration’s overall immigration agenda which has included a proposed 2,000-mile border wall with Mexico in addition to the travel bans and a number of deportations of immigrants who have been living in the US for decades and had received reprieves to stay under previous administrations.

David Bier, an immigration policy analyst for the libertarian think tank Cato Institute, said the establishment of the centre does not exactly jive with the President’s focus on a strong economy.

The focus on stemming terrorism, which is “such a small threat” in terms of immigration, will “inevitably harm the economy a significant amount” given the economic contributions of immigrants.

He also noted that measures such as the centre and extreme vetting also “discourages travel,” another hit to the US economy.