

Gambian, Afghan Students Refused Us Visas For Science Contest

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Gambia's government has put forth the money for another round of USA visa applications for the robotics team members, and the teens are being interviewed again Wednesday, Darboe said. Afghanistan and Gambia are not.

"They put in so much effort into building this, and now, after all the sacrifice and energy they put in, they have been left disheartened", Darboe, who is also the team's mentor, said on Monday.

Team members, Fatemah told Forbes: "We want to show the world we can do it, we just need a chance". The students' creation was being shipped Tuesday to the competition. "Their parents had to sacrifice a lot to pay this fee". Organisers said at the time they were not sure if the rejection was linked to Trump's anti-immigrant policies or if talk of the travel ban was being used to "to blatantly reject everyone".

The event takes place in Washington, D.C. later this month.

Gambia team member Fatoumata Ceesay, 17, said she hopes their second interview will get them to the US, but she was not optimistic. She said, "It's very **disappointing** knowing that we are the only two countries that aren't going to take part in the competition".

It said that these were the only two nations that had been refused out of more than 160.

"But we're not giving up, despite the challenges we face, we still continue to work hard", she said.

The robot the teens created is a ball sorting machine, and will be sent off to the USA without them, with the Gambian American Association representing them at the event.

Joe Sestak, the president of FIRST Global, said he has already promised the Gambia and Afghanistan teams that they will be Skyping into the competition as their robots are presented. "We still are making them a part of this", he said.

Afghanistan itself is not on the list but when asked why the girls were not allowed entry into the USA, a U.S. State Department spokesperson cited regulations that prohibited the agency from discussing individual visa cases.

Media commentator and researcher from the Cato Institute, Jonathan Blanks, tweeted: "I feel safer now that we've denied a once in a lifetime opportunity to a group of girls whose country we've been bombing since their birth". FIRST provided letters of support and informed teams about the questions that might be asked during interviews. "All of the countries can participate in the competitions, but we can't".