



Donald Trump's seven-country Muslim ban sparks protests

January 29, 2017

Resistance to US President Donald Trump's crackdown on Muslim immigration has mounted quickly, with protests spreading across the country and the first legal challenge filed to an order branded as blatantly discriminatory.

Around 2,000 angry protesters flocked to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport after a dozen travellers were detained there, including two Iraqi men on Sunday, shortly after Trump signed the travel ban.

Large protests also took place at the main airports for Washington, Chicago, Minneapolis, Denver, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Dallas, where USA Today said about 50 people were detained.

Mr Trump's rival in his successful White House bid Hillary Clinton lent her support to the protests.

And a US federal judge has issued an emergency stay that temporarily blocks the government from sending people out of the country after they have landed at an American airport with valid visas.

The American Civil Liberties Union estimates the stay will affect 100 to 200 people detained at US airports or in transit, but government lawyers could not confirm that number.

Judge Ann Donnelly of the US District Court in New York made the order today.

The ruling is a massive blow to President Trump.

The US Department of Homeland Security says it's monitoring litigation to do with President Donald Trump's executive order affecting seven Muslim-majority countries but had not yet seen a copy of the emergency stay issued by a Federal Court.

Meanwhile, the President has spoken by phone with various world leaders, amid growing international alarm and a legal challenge over his moves to drastically limit Muslim immigration to the United States.

In a flurry of calls that started early in the morning and rounded out an already frantically paced week, Trump spoke with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Russian President Vladimir Putin. He also spoke to French President Francois Hollande before Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull.

The conversations gave the US president an early opportunity to explain new policies that have baffled and unnerved much of the rest of the world — particularly his order to temporarily halt all refugee arrivals and those of travellers from seven mainly Muslim countries including war-ravaged Syria.

Qantas Offers Refunds

Qantas will offer refunds to any passengers caught up in US President Donald Trump's immigration freeze on seven Muslim-majority nations. The airline said it will change its processes and booking systems following advice from the US government regarding tighter entry conditions.

“Passengers booked on Qantas for travel to the United States who use a passport from Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Yemen, Libya have a number of options, including a change to their destination or a refund,” Qantas said in a statement.

Trump's Private Call To Turnbull

Mr Turnbull held his first talks with President Trump while his chief strategist Stephen Bannon and national security adviser Mike Flynn were in attendance.

Together, they emphasised the “enduring strength and closeness” of the US-Australia relationship in a 25-minute phone call, the White House has said in a statement.

“Both leaders emphasised the enduring strength and closeness of the US-Australia relationship that is critical for peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and globally,” the White House said.

Foreign Affairs Minister Julie Bishop says Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull was “pleased with the outcome” of his discussion with US President Donald Trump.

It is understood President Trump told Mr Turnbull that the US will honour a deal to resettle refugees from Australia's offshore detention centres.

The Australian understands that the Prime Minister has been given assurances from Mr Trump that the refugee deal struck last year will go ahead.

Ms Bishop, in Los Angeles at the G'Day USA gala, said she has also had a second conversation with US Vice President Mike Pence.

“I've had two very constructive conversations with Vice President Pence and I know the prime minister was pleased with the outcome of the discussion he had with the president today,” she

said, adding Mr Turnbull would travel to the US for a yet to be scheduled meeting with Mr Trump.

Mr Turnbull was also expected to discuss the strength of the Australia/US alliance, trade, South China Sea dispute and the war against terrorism.

Trade Minister Steven Ciobo said he's confident Australia received a "very good ear" from the Trump administration, continuing the good relationship between the two countries that goes back many decades.

He said he hasn't seen anything or heard any conversations that would indicate Mr Trump is about to tear up a refugee deal Mr Turnbull secured with former president Barack Obama.

"But if you want me to crystal ball gaze what a US president is going to do, I'm afraid that's not my core business," Mr Ciobo told Sky News.

Trump And Putin's Private Call

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his new US counterpart Donald Trump agreed to develop relations "as equals" and to establish "real co-ordination" against the Islamic State (IS) group in Syria, the Kremlin said.

"The two sides expressed a willingness to work actively together to stabilise and develop Russian-American co-operation on a constructive basis, as equals, and to mutual benefit," Putin said in a statement after the two men's first phone conversation since Trump took office.

Describing it as a "positive" exchange, the Kremlin said they touched on many subjects from the Iranian nuclear deal to the Ukraine and Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, the tensions on the Korean peninsula and trade relations.

The "priority" in their talks was the fight against international terrorism. "The presidents said they were in favour of putting in place real co-ordination of Russian and American actions to destroy IS and the other terrorist groupings in Syria," the statement said.

They both also expressed the desire to organise a meeting between the two leaders, the Kremlin said.

Putin and Trump spoke for the first time by phone in November just after the billionaire tycoon's surprise election victory. They agreed on the need to "normalise" relations between Moscow and Washington after the tensions during the previous US administration of president Barack Obama over the conflicts in Syria and Ukraine.

In a phone call with Trump, French President Francois Hollande also warned his new US counterpart against adopting a protectionist stance and called on him to respect the principle of accepting refugees.

During a telephone conversation between the two leaders Hollande stressed the "economic and political consequences of a protectionist approach", the Elysee Palace said in a statement.

“Faced with an unstable and uncertain world, withdrawal into oneself is a dead-end response,” Hollande was quoted as saying.

He added that defending democratic principles required compliance with “the principles on which it is founded, in particular the acceptance of refugees”.

Trump’s First Weekly Address

President Trump has posted his first address to the American people on Twitter.

He told viewers that they had started the process of getting more products made in the US by local workers. He also mentioned his plan to repeal and replace Obamacare and build a wall on the US-Mexico border.

“This administration has hit the ground running we’re doing it with speed, we’re doing it with intelligence,” he said.

President Trump also acted Saturday to fulfil a key portion of his pledge to “drain the swamp” in Washington, banning administration officials from ever lobbying the US on behalf of a foreign government and imposing a separate five-year ban on other lobbying.

Administration officials described the bans as historic in scope. But it was not immediately clear how either one would be enforced.

Trump has said individuals who want to aid him in his quest to “Make America Great Again” should focus on the jobs they will be doing to help the American people, and not thinking about the future income they could rake in by peddling their influence after serving in government.

“Most of the people standing behind me will not be able to go to work,” Trump joked, referring to an array of White House officials lined up behind him as he sat at his desk in the Oval Office. The officials included Vice President Mike Pence, chief of staff Reince Priebus, senior strategist Steve Bannon and counsellor Kellyanne Conway.

“So you have one last chance to get out.” Trump said he talked about the ban a lot during the campaign and “we’re now putting it into effect.”

In a separate action, Trump took steps to begin restructuring the White House National Security Council. Aides said the changes would help the council better adapt to cyber, digital, terrorist and other modern-day threats.

A third action gives the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the president’s top military advisers, 30 days to prepare a plan to defeat the Islamic State group.

‘Extreme Vetting’ As Protests Begin

Trump’s pronouncement on Muslim immigration makes good on one of his most controversial campaign promises to subject travellers from Islamic countries to “extreme vetting,” which he declared would make America safe from “radical Islamic terrorists.”

“This is big stuff,” the new US president declared at the Pentagon on Friday, after signing an executive order entitled “Protection of the nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States.”

The decree suspends the entire US refugee resettlement program for at least 120 days while tough vetting rules are established.

The new protocols “ensure that those approved for refugee admission do not pose a threat to the security and welfare of the United States.” In addition, they specifically bar Syrian refugees from the United States indefinitely, or until the president himself decides that they no longer pose a threat.

Meanwhile, no visas will be issued for 90 days to migrants or visitors from seven mainly Muslim countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Detentions Already Underway

US authorities wasted no time implementing Trump’s order, detaining travellers arriving at American airports within hours of the measures being signed, media reports said.

The New York Times reported that airport officials as early as Friday night began detaining travellers, some of whom were already aboard their flights when Trump announced his executive order.

The order also lays the groundwork for what Trump has pledged will be “extreme vetting” of visa applicants’ backgrounds -- with some exceptions for members of “religious minorities,” a caveat many see as a way to apply favourable treatment to Christians from majority-Muslim states.

US rights groups filed a legal challenge Saturday after two Iraqi men were detained Friday night at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York.

The American Civil Liberties Union and other advocacy groups are seeking the men’s release on grounds that they are being held unlawfully, and asked that they be freed so they could at least request asylum and avoid being sent back to Iraq.

The groups asked for their suit to be considered a class action on behalf of all people held up in the same way. The two Iraqi men have valid visas, the documents stated.

One of them had worked for the US government in Iraq for 10 years and the other was coming to America to join his wife, who had worked for a US contractor, the lawsuit said.

The former, Hameed Khalid Darweesh, was released later in the day and spoke to reporters at the airport.

“America is the greatest nation, the greatest people in the world,” Darweesh said.

Asked what he would say to Trump, he added: "I like him. But I don't know. This is a policy I don't know. He's a president. I'm a normal person." Mark Doss, a supervising lawyer at the International Refugee Project at the Urban Justice Center, said Darweesh's detention and release showed the new policy was being implemented "with no guidance." Immigration advocacy groups issued an appeal for demonstrations at JFK airport, which spread rapidly over social media.

According to Camille Mackler of the New York Immigration Coalition, two New York lawmakers went to the airport to try to gain access to the men.

International groups and civil liberties organisations have roundly condemned Trump's orders.

"'Extreme vetting' is just a euphemism for discriminating against Muslims," said Anthony Romero, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Romero said Trump's order breached the US constitution's ban on religious discrimination by choosing countries with Muslim majorities for tougher treatment.

Many foreign leaders said they were aghast over the new US policy. Iran answered in kind by saying it would ban Americans from entering the country, calling Trump's action insulting.

But the US leader did get backing from Czech President Milos Zeman, who praised him for being "concerned with the safety of his citizens."

The other man the lawyers are representing, Haider Sameer Abdulkhaleq Alshawi, remained in custody as his legal advocates sought his release.

Mr Alshawi's wife and brother-in-law both worked in back office jobs with a US security contractor in Iraq. He was on his way to join his wife in the United States.

When lawyers trying to reach Alshawi asked US Customs agents who they could speak to about the detention, an agent allegedly replied, "Mr. President. Call Mr Trump."

Mr Trump's order also said Iraqi citizens, as well as people from six other Middle Eastern countries, cannot enter the US for 90 days, and suspends the US Refugee Admissions Program for 120 days until it is reinstated "only for nationals of countries for whom" members of Mr Trump's Cabinet deem can be properly vetted.

The lawyers for the two men called for a hearing because they maintain the detention of people with valid visas is illegal.

"Because the executive order is unlawful as applied to petitioners, their continued detention based solely on the executive order violates their Fifth Amendment procedural and substantive due process rights," the lawyers argue in court papers.

Zuckerberg Slams Trump's Ban

It comes as Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg hit out at Mr Trump's executive order, saying in a lengthy Facebook post that "the United States is a nation of immigrants, and we should be proud of that."

Still, some Muslim countries were spared from Mr Trump's blacklist, even though they have clear ties to terrorism.

According to the New York Daily News, Mr Trump doesn't hold any business interests in any of the countries on the list, but holds major stakes in several of those excluded from it, records show.

According to statistics tallied by the conservative-leaning Cato Institute, not one American was killed on US soil by citizens from any of those countries between 1975 and 2015.

However, the same set of statistics show that nearly 3000 Americans were killed by citizens from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Turkey in the same time period — with the bulk of those killed being victims of the September 11 attacks. Yet, people from those four countries are still able to apply for US visas and travel permits.

New restrictions on immigrants and refugees will mean legal permanent US residents, also known as green cards holders, from Syria and six other Muslim-majority countries will also have to be cleared into the country on a case-by-case basis, a senior US administration official said,

World Reacts To Trump's Muslim Ban

*French President Francois Hollande: "Europe is facing a moment of truth. The issue is populism. What we are hearing from the US encourages populism and even extremism. They are saying that Europe should not take immigrants, shouldn't stay together, not believe in climate change."

*Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau tweeted: "To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada."

*Israel President Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted that Israel's wall along its border with Egypt had stemmed a swell of African migrants: "President Trump is right. I built a wall along Israel's southern border. It stopped all illegal immigration. Great success. Great idea."

*Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim: "You cannot settle this (refugee) issue by building walls. Nobody leaves their homes for nothing." Turkey has admitted some 3 million Syrian refugees since the start of the war in its neighbour.

"They came here to save their lives and our doors were open. And if the same thing happened again, we would do it again."

*German foreign minister Sigmar Gabriel: “‘Love thy neighbour’ is part of this tradition, the act of helping others.”

*UK Prime Minister Theresa May: “The United States is responsible for the United States’ policy on refugees.”

*Far-right Dutch populist Geert Wilders, whose party is polling strongly ahead of the country’s March 15 election, said in a tweet: “No immigrants from Islamic countries.”

*Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani said the new US President had “forgotten the Berlin Wall fell years ago” as he attacked the planned construction, aimed at tackling illegal immigration.

“Today is not the time to erect walls between nations,” he said in a speech carried live on Iranian state television.

*Berlin’s mayor Michael Mueller said his city, which was divided from 1961 to 1989, “cannot look on without comment when a country plans to build a new wall”. “We Berliners know best how much suffering the division of a continent, cemented by barbed wire and concrete, caused,” he said.

Iraqi Family Barred From Entering USA

It comes as an Iraqi family was barred from flying from Cairo to New York overnight, airport officials said.

The husband, wife and two children, who had American visas and reserved seats on an EgyptAir flight, were informed that they could not board because of the new regulation, the officials said.

But an EgyptAir official said the airline had not yet been formally notified of the new regulations.

The family had been barred after a flight manifest was sent to New York’s JFK airport, which responded with instructions that the Iraqi family was not to board.

The airline’s website did not provide updated travel advice for the United States.

Qatar Airways, one of the largest Middle East airlines, said on its website that citizens of those seven countries could still travel to the United States if they had a permanent residence permit.

The Qatari travel alert said government officials and their immediate family members, as well as representatives of international organisations were exempt from the restrictions.

IRANIAN DIRECTOR TO MISS OSCARS AFTER BAN

The Muslim banned has affected a film director and nominee who now won’t be able to attend the ceremony in February.

Iranian movie director Asghar Farhadi, 45, made *The Salesman* last year which is up for best foreign language film at the Academy Awards — a gong he previously won in 2012, reports The Sun.

However, the president of the US' largest Iranian-American grassroots organisation has claimed the decorated director won't be able to get into the country because of a new ban issued by the White House.

Trita Parsi, from the National Iranian American Council, took to Twitter to say: "Confirmed: Iran's Asghar Farhadi won't be let into the US to attend Oscars. He's nominated for best foreign language film."

Farhadi's film *A Separation* was the first Iranian movie to ever win the Oscars' best foreign language film category with an emotional Farhadi accepting the award in person from Sandra Bullock at the ceremony in 2012.

He said: "At this time, many Iranians all over the world are watching us and I imagine them to be very happy.

"At the time when talk of war, intimidation, and aggression is exchanged between politicians, the name of their country, Iran, is spoken here through her glorious culture, a rich and ancient culture that has been hidden under the heavy dust of politics."

He added: "I proudly offer this award to the people of my country, the people who respect all cultures and civilisations and despise hostility and resentment."

Iranian director may miss Oscars over ban

Trump Bashes Media Again

Overnight, Mr Trump also attacked two major US newspapers in a Twitter blast on a busy Saturday in which he was scheduled to speak with five world leaders, including Russia's Vladimir Putin and Australian PM, Malcolm Turnbull.

Mr Trump criticised *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* as being dishonest in a series of tweets that featured several typos. The reason for the early morning onslaught was not immediately clear.

Mr Trump was scheduled to speak during the day with Mr Putin and the leaders of Japan, Germany, France and Australia.

Rather than address what he did in his fast-paced first week in power, or prepare for the frenetic day ahead, Mr Trump laid into two of the most prestigious US dailies.

He has made a habit of attacking the media, which he accuses of treating him unfairly.

Mr Trump wrote on Saturday that the two papers "got me wrong right from the beginning and still have not changed course, and never will. DISHONEST." "The failing @nytimes has been

wrong about me from the very beginning. Said I would lose the primaries, then the general election. FAKE NEWS!” he added.

Twitter is one of Mr Trump’s preferred conduits for communication. He has more than 22.5 million followers on the messaging platform.