



Advice to US-bound Pinoys: Must have lawyer's phone numbers

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February 3, 2017

An immigration lawyer asserted that all people, especially kababayans, should be prepared in their travels in case US President Donald Trump decides to expand his ban to other countries.

Last week, Trump signed executive orders that put a travel ban on those traveling to the US from seven Muslim-majority countries for 90 days, and banning refugees from entering the US for 120 days.

Under the order, Syrian refugees are suspended indefinitely.

His executive orders have been met with protests at airports throughout the country.

Immigration attorney Robert Uy noted that the Republican president is following through on his earlier campaign promise to ban Muslims.

Trump's words from the 2016 presidential election: "Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what the hell is going on."

Uy pointed out that also on the campaign trail, Trump cited the Philippines as a country of origin of a suspected terrorist who was arrested in California.

Trump said: "A legal permanent resident from the Philippines was convicted from joining al-Qaeda, and the Taliban, in order to kill as many Americans as possible."

Uy advised all people, especially kababayans, that they should be prepared in their travels, in the event President Trump decides to expand his ban to other countries.

"Make sure that your family members know when you're arriving," he said. "They need to have contact information for an attorney, or contact information of the pro-bono attorneys working at the airports, if they can. The attorney that they should have the contact information of, should be

an immigration attorney who has done habeas corpus petitions before — in order to ensure a release.”

Uy also said it is critical not to sign anything if detained.

“What they’ve been doing is forcing people to sign I-407 forms,” he said. “They’re basically forms that make you give up your green card.”

For individuals from the seven banned countries who may have run into trouble with the law, and who may not yet have US citizenship, Uy advised: “You should also not leave the country if you have any sort of criminal record, or criminal charges pending, or an arrest,” he said. “It makes no sense at this point to chance it, considering the change in enforcement priorities.”

Conservative think-tank, The Cato Institute, said zero Americans have died from terror incidents by people from Trump’s seven Muslim-majority countries since 1975, to 2015 — although the countries of origin of the 9/11 (Sept. 11, 2001 World Trade Center attack) hijackers were left off the list.

“If he’s saying that this is to protect us against terror, why is he not picking the countries where the people actually came from who committed those terrorists attacks?” Uy asked. “That’s the issue.”

Uy joined other critics of the President’s executive orders in calling them “unconstitutional,” citing how Mr. Trump violates the Equal Protection Clause of the US Constitution, the First Amendment which includes freedom of religion, and the 1965 Immigration Nationality Act — which says you cannot discriminate based on national origin.