



Trump's new travel ban slammed by rights groups

ACLU vows to keep fighting US president's 'Muslim ban' in court, as politicians call order 'un-American'.

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US civil rights groups have condemned President Donald Trump's revised immigration order as a "Muslim ban" in all but name, and vowed to keep fighting it in court.

The order signed on Monday bans citizens from six majority-Muslim countries from entering the US for 90 days and also halts the country's refugee programme for 120 days.

Major changes compared to the previous order that was blocked by judges are that Iraqis are no longer banned and that people who have already been granted visas will not be turned away.

"The Trump administration has conceded that its original Muslim ban was indefensible. Unfortunately, it has replaced it with a scaled-back version that shares the same fatal flaws," said Omar Jadwat, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Immigrant Rights Project.

"The only way to actually fix the Muslim ban is not to have a Muslim ban," Jadwat said in a statement.

Trump's first immigration order, signed on January 27, resulted in more than two dozen legal cases in US courts.

The new version, which will come into effect at midnight on March 16, has removed language that would give priority to religious minorities.

Critics had accused the administration of adding such language to help Christians get into the US while excluding Muslims.

Presenting the revised order, Attorney General Jeff Sessions said it "responsibly provides a needed pause so we can carefully review how we scrutinise people coming here from these countries of concern".

"Three of these nations are state sponsors of terrorism," Sessions said, referring to Iran, Sudan and Syria, adding that others had served as "safe havens" for fighters.

Noor Zafar, a lawyer at the Centre for Constitutional Rights, New York, told Al Jazeera that the new travel ban is not justified by facts.

"I think this is still a ban designed to keep Muslims out of this country," she said. "If you look at the six countries that are targeted by this ban they're Muslim-majority countries and if you look at the evidence that the administration is offering to support its claim that these countries are places from where 'Islamic radicals' come in, that data is just not borne out of facts."

There have been zero fatal attacks on US soil since 1975 by nationals from the six countries targeted with the ban, according to an analysis of attacks by the Cato Institute.

Trump's first order led to chaos at airports, protests and international condemnation.

Protesters gathered outside the White House on Monday evening to condemn the new order, calling it anti-Muslim and Islamophobic and saying it does not adhere to American values of welcoming refugees.

Bob Ferguson, the attorney general of Washington state, which succeeded in having the previous ban suspended, said he was "carefully reviewing" the new order.

'Mean-spirited, un-American'

Top Democrats also condemned the Republican's new ban, with party leader Tom Perez saying "we have a responsibility to fight back".

Chuck Schumer, leader of the minority Democrats in the Senate, said he expected the revised order to have the same uphill battle in the courts as the original version.

"A watered-down ban is still a ban," he said in a statement.

"Despite the administration's changes, this dangerous executive order makes us less safe, not more, it is mean-spirited, and un-American. It must be repealed."

The New York Immigration Coalition called the revised ban "a mask for the same old hatred, fear and incompetence."

"This is just one more example of the president's concerted effort to divide this country and instil panic and fear in immigrant, refugee and Muslim communities," said NYIC director Steven Choi.

Human Rights Watch said the changes to the original January 27 order, which fell afoul of the US constitution because it appeared to overtly target Muslims, "are merely cosmetic".

"President Trump still seems to believe you can determine who's a terrorist by knowing which country a man, woman or child is from," said the group's US immigration researcher Grace Meng.

Rabbi Jack Moline, president of the Interfaith Alliance, said they expect as well to battle the revised order in court.

"Even in its slightly revised form, President Trump's Muslim ban violates constitutional principles and undermines America's standing in the world," Moline said.

"We must be clear that discriminating against millions of people on the basis of their religion does nothing to make Americans safer."