



Don't normalize Trump's vision for America

Alex Shams

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I am a child of a Muslim refugee. My father found safety and shelter in the United States after fleeing violence in his homeland, Iran. Yet under President Donald Trump's ban, he likely would have been denied entry, no questions asked.

Signed on Holocaust Remembrance Day, Trump's "Muslim ban" halts the resettlement of refugees from countries such as Syria and Iraq. Much like in the 1930s and 1940s, when the United States refused to allow Jewish refugees fleeing Europe -- including Anne Frank's family - - to enter the country, this new law could lead to further suffering and even death for the many who can no longer hope to escape their plight.

Today, like then, the government justified this refusal on "national security" grounds -- a nonsensical claim given that these refugees are already subject to nearly two years vetting before being allowed in. Indeed, the United States already has an extremely tough vetting system, one so biased against Muslims that the Department of Homeland Security was sued.

Getting a visa to enter the United States from the affected countries was already extremely difficult, and involved multiple interviews and background checks by US embassies. Furthermore, exactly zero Americans have been killed in attacks on US soil by anyone from the countries on the list, according to a Cato Institute study. Adding insult to injury, the United States has bombed five of the seven targeted countries -- a fact that has led some to note darkly that the main criteria for getting on the list feels like "if we bombed, we ban you."

The order could affect hundreds of thousands of people already in America as well, including many who have lived here for years on permanent residency visas or green cards. After years of vetting, their lives and families are being torn apart, and many longtime residents likely fear their right to live here could be revoked should the abstract idea of "national security" be invoked. This is a classic tool of dictatorial regimes.

But for those of us affected by this order, this is not an abstract danger. This is something very real -- and very scary.

Longtime US residents have been blocked from returning home at airports around the world, including those who are dual citizens of Canada, the United Kingdom or France. Friends who are studying in colleges across the country are being warned not to leave the United States because they might not be let back in. This means they can't visit family, they can't attend weddings, and they can't spend time with their partners and loved ones any more.

Those who went home for winter break, meanwhile, are now stuck, placing the degrees they have been studying for -- often for years -- in jeopardy. There are reports that people with valid US visas are being deported on arrival, and some cases where people have even been removed from planes after having boarded flights bound for the United States.

In Trump's vision for America, I would never have been born. There's no simpler way to say this.

When I see pictures of Iraqi or Syrian refugee children who have drowned off Greece, I see myself and I see my father. I see the cruelty of a world that has lost sight of its own humanity and refuses to see the humanity of those most downtrodden and suffering. Instead, we turn our backs on them in their times of need.

As millions around the world flee their homes to escape death and destruction, it is more imperative than ever for us to reaffirm our commitment to the most fundamental of American values: protecting the rights of the world's most vulnerable and offering a safe refuge for those in need.

Closing the door to Muslim refugees means sentencing many of them to almost certain death.

While the ban currently only targets individuals from seven countries, we must remember that this is only the beginning, and appears part of a wider assault on the most vulnerable and marginalized Americans after years in which demonization of Muslims, refugees, immigrants and people of color of many diverse backgrounds has increasingly become the norm.

First it was Muslims. Tomorrow, who will it be?

We must resist. Americans of all backgrounds must understand that Trump's ban is an assault on our core values as a country and as a people. We must ensure that this kind of hatred does not become normalized. We can do that by sending a clear message that we as a nation refuse to accept racism, Islamophobia and fear-mongering.