



Angelina Jolie Weighs In on Travel Ban: 'Refugee Policy Should Be Based on Facts, Not Fear'

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Angelina Jolie is the latest celebrity to add her voice to the chorus in opposition of President Donald Trump's controversial executive order, which suspends visas from seven Muslim-majority countries and temporarily halts the United States' entire refugee resettlement program.

"Refugees are men, women and children caught in the fury of war, or the cross hairs of persecution," the Oscar winner penned in an op-ed piece for the *New York Times*. "Far from being terrorists, they are often the victims of terrorism themselves."

From 2001-12, Jolie represented the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as a Goodwill Ambassador, and has worked closely with Syrian refugees.

While the president's order calls for a temporary ban for six of the nations included, it suspends the entry of Syrian refugees indefinitely.

"I'm proud of our country's history of giving shelter to the most vulnerable people. Americans have shed blood to defend the idea that human rights transcend culture, geography, ethnicity and religion," Jolie continued. "The decision to suspend the resettlement of refugees to the United States and deny entry to citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries has been met with shock by our friends around the world precisely because of this record.

"The global refugee crisis and the threat from terrorism make it entirely justifiable that we consider how best to secure our borders. Every government must balance the needs of its citizens with its international responsibilities. But our response must be measured and should be based on facts, not fear."

The issue is especially personal for Jolie, considering that many of her children were not born in the U.S.

"As the mother of six children, who were all born in foreign lands and are proud American citizens, I very much want our country to be safe for them, and all our nation's children," she added. "But I also want to know that refugee children who qualify for asylum will always have a chance to plead their case to a compassionate America. And that we can manage our security without writing off citizens of entire countries -- even babies -- as unsafe to visit our country by virtue of geography or religion."

Before signing the executive order on Friday, Trump explained his actions, saying, "I am establishing new vetting measures to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America. We want to ensure that we are not admitting into our country the very threats our soldiers are fighting overseas. We only want to admit those into our country who will support our country and love deeply our people."

According to the CATO Institute, zero refugees from the seven countries included in the travel ban have killed anyone in a terror attack on U.S. soil in the last 40 years. The CATO Institute also reports that Americans have a 0.00003 percent chance of dying in an attack by a foreign-born terrorist.

"It is simply not true that our borders are overrun or that refugees are admitted to the United States without close scrutiny," Jolie pointed out. "Refugees are in fact subject to the highest level of screening of any category of traveler to the United States. This includes months of interviews, and security checks carried out by the F.B.I., the National Counterterrorism Center, the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department."

According to the New York Times, the vetting process for refugees to gain entry into the U.S. can take up to two years.

In 2015, officials told NPR that only two percent of the 1,800 Syrian refugees admitted to the U.S. between 2013-2015 were single males of combat age. Reportedly, half of the Syrian refugees granted entry were children and "about a quarter of them [were] adults over 60."

"We all want to keep our country safe," Jolie wrote. "So we must look to the sources of the terrorist threat -- to the conflicts that give space and oxygen to groups like the Islamic State, and the despair and lawlessness on which they feed. We have to make common cause with people of all faiths and backgrounds fighting the same threat and seeking the same scrutiny. This is where I would hope any president of our great nation would lead on behalf of all Americans."