



## **The Muslim ban was supposed to be temporary. Congress should act now to lift it, student says.**

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I was in the senior year at Noor-Ul-Iman School in Monmouth Junction when Donald Trump was campaigning during the 2016 presidential election. In between my furtive hopes for the future — to not trip while walking down the stage at graduation, to take classes I'd actually enjoy in college, to survive living alone for the first time — there was a deep-seated worry in my home about what the future held.

In conversations at the dinner table, my parents would warn my brothers and I to be constantly vigilant. They warned me that my hijab made me a walking target. I told them they worried too much. But just a few months into my freshman year of college, a flyer by a white supremacist group calling for the removal of all Muslims from America was found posted mere feet away from my dorm.

I didn't realize it at the time, but my parents' worry was not just about my immediate physical safety. It was about my very ability to live in the country where I was born and raised. My parents uprooted their entire lives in the 1980s to immigrate to the United States, and now, we peered into a future where being involuntarily uprooted from America and moving back to Pakistan seemed likely.

When the Muslim ban was ordered, my first thought was about my grandmother. At 85 years old, with a smile as bright as the sun and a warmth that leaves her with friends everywhere she goes, my grandmother is my favorite person in the world. She suffers from dementia and Alzheimer's disease, and each day with her is a blessing. But what if I never saw her again, because she wouldn't be allowed into the country? And what threat exactly would her entry pose to the national security of the United States of America?

For others, the issue isn't just about seeing a beloved grandmother. It's about holding your baby in your arms as he takes his last breaths. In late December, [a Yemeni mother was kept from visiting her dying 2-year old son in Oakland](#). Only after organizing efforts across the country was she allowed into the United States. Her child died mere days later. The question is — are these sacrifices the price that we must pay to preserve national security? Do we have to perform acts of cruelty against some innocents to protect ourselves?

The answer is: absolutely not. Senior national security leaders -- from former CIA directors to the national counter-terrorism director to secretaries of defense -- have said no, that the Muslim

ban was unnecessary, unkind, and cruel. Research from national security groups as well as conservative think tanks, such as [the CATO Institute](#), have come out swinging against the Muslim ban and its adjacent discriminatory policies in the administration.

If these leading national security officials charged with keeping us safe and some of the most conservative policy outlets can show vociferous leadership calling for the repeal of the Muslim Ban, why can't Congress? Why can't they call the Muslim ban for what it is: an unnecessary and cruel attack on religious minorities and a coded effort by a few to promote a white ethno-state vision of America? It is time that we end such attempts to curb immigration and religious freedom, once and for all.

Some members of Congress justified their support for the first iteration of the Muslim ban by referring to it as a temporary measure. In 2017, Congressman Chris Smith (R-4th Dist.) called it a "pause as we find a way to secure and protect Americans." But with no end in sight, the Muslim ban is evidently more than just a pause.

Wednesday was the one year anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the current iteration of the Muslim ban pursuant to a section in the National Immigration Act, which gives President Trump the power to indefinitely bar people from entering America to protect national security interests. The No Ban Act ([HR 2214 | S 1123](#)), now before Congress, would amend this section and ensure that the president provides "proof, not prejudice" as his basis in making such decisions.

To members of Congress who expressed opposition in the days following the ban, I ask you to take substantive action and support this legislation. When asked about the Muslim ban in 2017, U.S. Rep. John Gottheimer (D-5th Dist.) said that "you can't just turn your back on what made America great." He has not yet expressed support for the No Ban Act.

To him, and to all of us, I say: Now is the chance to repeal the Muslim ban, to manifest our words and activism into meaningful legislation, and protect inclusion in the United States. That time is now.