



Banning Grandmas Only Hurts American Families

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A smiling, young woman in a gown is leaning over so her tiny grandmother can give her a kiss. A grandmother is preparing *torshee*, pickles, in a jar as she looks on. After taking a cigarette drag, a grandmother laughs without a care in the world. These are the many faces of the grandmas impacted by President Donald Trump's Muslim Ban 3.0, that was issued in an proclamation on September 24. This new ban, expected to go in to effect on October 18, is more targeted and indefinite, meaning there's no 90-day ban. It targets the original five Muslim-majority countries—Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen—but also adds Muslim-majority Chad, drops Sudan from the original list, and subjects Iraqi citizens to “additional scrutiny.” The new ban also adds North Korea and Venezuelan government officials. While each country has their own set of travel restrictions, most will be permanently barred from coming to the United States for study, work, or vacation. The American Civil Liberties Union's Executive Director Anthony D. Romero said that the Trump administration's “original sin of targeting Muslims cannot be cured by throwing other countries onto his enemies list.”

In the original 90-day Muslim Ban, it stipulated that exempt individuals must have a “bona fide relationship,” and that individuals with blood ties—such as grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, brother-in-laws, sister-in-laws, nieces, nephews, and cousins—did not count. When the news broke in June, the hashtag #GrandparentsNotTerrorists went viral on Twitter, including a photo of myself with my beloved Iranian grandmother, which I had posted as a show of solidarity. This prompted a friend and I to start the Instagram account (@bannedgrandmas), ‘Banned Grandmas,’ to show the human faces impacted by the Muslim Ban. By creating the account, we hoped that Americans of different religious and ethnic backgrounds would see their own grandparents in these photos and feel empathy, perhaps enough to reach out to their representatives and sign a petition to express their dismay at the unjust ban. In July, a U.S. district judge in Hawaii limited the scope of the ban, by ordering grandparents and other family members be exempt. However, the U.S. Supreme Court overruled and recently cancelled the oral arguments hearing scheduled for October 10. Now lawyers involved the original ban are to submit briefs by October 5 to address “whether, or to what extent, the proclamation” may render the two cases moot. President Trump's latest proclamation may prove harder for anti-ban advocates to provoke a favorable ruling from the Supreme Court.

Since starting our account, the photos we have posted on Instagram have received love and support from a broad cross section of Americans. However, advocates of the ban don't seem to understand or sympathize with the frustrated American families impacted by the executive order. The vast majority of these grandparents have no interest in coming to the United States to resettle and "take advantage" of the system, they only want to visit their families and participate in special occasions like weddings, births, and graduations. These grandparents have lived in their homelands all their lives and uprooting after a certain age can not only be psychically straining, but also emotionally. Advocates of the Muslim Ban argue that people wanting to see their families should visit them in their ancestral homelands. For certain people—refugees, journalists, and activists—going back to their ancestral homeland means the possibility of incarceration and in some cases, death.

We believe "bona fide" relationships shouldn't fall under the Trump administration's guidelines. Banning family members forcibly separates people from their loved ones whose only crime is being from a certain country. None of the listed Muslim-majority countries were involved in the September 11 terrorist attacks. According to the [CATO Institute](#), a national from the original six Muslim-majority countries has not committed a terrorist act on U.S. soil since 1980.

The Trump administration doesn't have much to show for the Muslim Ban since its implementation in June. Rather than look at the list of countries that the U.S. has experienced terrorist acts from, President Trump has zeroed in on some countries it doesn't have relations with or doesn't share information because of lack thereof ties. If the president wants to combat terrorism, resources would be better used in looking into why the majority of U.S. State Department designated terrorist organizations are Wahhabi-influenced and perhaps even focusing on right-wing extremists in our own backyard. It only proves that banning grandparents has little to do with protecting "the security and interests of the United States and its people."

The only time a grandparent has been guilty of something is spoiling and overfeeding their loved ones. Besides, when has anyone ever heard of an 85-year-old grandmother committing an act of terrorism? Let's stop banning grandparents.