



Where was the outrage when Obama was hurting innocent foreigners?

January 29, 2017

There were many troubling stories over the weekend about foreign travelers being abused and even endangered because of President Donald Trump's new travel restrictions. One story, that of heroic Iraqi translator Hameed Khalid Darweesh, who was detained for 18 hours at JFK airport, captured the world's attention.

Trump's executive order continues to provoke global protest. But spending the weekend reading about similar stories, I must ask — why is this kind of outrage seemingly now just limited to Donald Trump?

The Los Angeles Times featured a story on Sunday about Alexander Gutierrez Garcia, who fled an oppressive dictatorship to seek refugee status in the United States, but unfortunately for him America's president issued an executive order that denied him entry.

That order came from President Barack Obama.

Garcia wanted a green card so he could rescue his wife and daughters from Cuba, but earlier this month President Obama rescinded the decades old "wet foot, dry foot" immigration policy, leaving U.S.-bound Cubans in limbo. "What can we do?" Gutierrez asked in a telephone interview from Costa Rica, his voice shaking. "Obama has killed our dream of living in freedom."

A 2011 New York Times story featured Iraqis who had helped America's war effort fearing for their lives and seeking U.S. visas, but President Obama halted their plans through an executive order.

A man referred to only as Abu Hassan, for security reasons, said when he received a phone call to inform him of Obama's new visa restrictions that would directly affected his family, it "[hurt him] even more than all the threats [he and his family had] received." Among those threats: his brother was kidnapped and tortured, and their family dog was killed, left with a note attached that said, "Leave, traitors. You are spies for the Americans."

“I feel sick,” said the mother of her family’s dim prospects due to Obama’s policy shift.

This Iraqi family’s pro-American war efforts were similar to those of Hameed Khalid Darweesh, who saw millions rally to him on Saturday. But no one rallied for Abu Hassan’s family or those like him, even though his story was in the New York Times. “This is not a priority right now for anyone in the government,” said Becca Heller, who runs the [Iraqi Refugee Assistance Project](#) at the Urban Justice Center in New York, the Times noted. “Not enough people in the Obama administration care about this topic.”

Obama’s Iraq “[Muslim ban](#)” lasted six months, but how many Iraqis suffered due to his actions? We know there are [thousands of suffering Cubans](#) right now due to Obama’s policy change.

As of this writing, [109 travelers](#) have been denied entry to the U.S. due to Trump’s action. Yet his policy could affect millions, and particularly scores of Syrian refugees who have been banned indefinitely. Trump applying restrictions to green card holders and other legal U.S. residents makes his directive uniquely oppressive. It’s [tragic](#).

But what truly captures our attention and raises our consciences are rarely necessarily policy particulars, but human stories. Why did personal tales of fear and desperation not capture our attention when Obama was the cause? If CNN had blasted them for 24 hours, might they have?

And why didn’t CNN do that?

Throughout the weekend, many passed around an instructive Cato Institute [study](#) that showed only three deaths in the last 40 years have been committed on U.S. soil by those who entered the country as refugees. But this was also true when President Obama cited two Iraqi immigrants [arrested](#) in Bowling Green, Ky., as his reason for clamping down on Iraqi visas. Trump now cites the 2015 San Bernardino, Calif., terrorist attack, which the president’s new executive order [would not](#) have prevented.

Many now point out the illogical nature of Trump’s policy, but I don’t recall the same people criticizing Obama’s similar logic or policies.

Why?

Because most did not pay attention to Obama’s [anti-immigrant policies](#). There was no 24-hour, days long cable news barrage about it. There were no hashtags, social media campaigns or protests. The pain was just as real for those suffering, but the coverage and popular reaction were almost nonexistent.

So many of those outraged right now — and [rightly](#) — generally [liked Obama](#). They trusted him. Now, similarly, Trump supporters will defend this president’s actions, no matter how much harm he causes, because they like and trust him too.

But shouldn’t other people’s pain come before partisanship? Should Alexander Gutierrez Garcia and Abu Hassan matter less than Hameed Khalid Darweesh?

Shouldn’t lending our moral support or outrage be based on something more than merely what presidents we like?

