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Trump travel ban is a bad idea that hurts U.S.

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When my parents came to the United States, one of the first Bible verses they ingrained in my head was from the Book of Matthew: “I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

As an advocate for refugees, as the child of immigrants and as an American, there is no choice for me but to vehemently stand in opposition to President Trump’s travel ban across seven Muslim-majority nations. Sources within the White House say Trump plans a do-over of his failed immigration ban that was eventually halted by the federal courts, with the new version crafted so it won’t face dismissal by our judiciary system. Early reports indicate that it will exclude any religious prioritization for Christians, and it will include all the nations from the previous ban. In case you need reminding, the countries are Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen and the country whose immigrants have called San Diego home — Iraq. Not a single American citizen was killed on U.S. soil by citizens from any of these countries between 1975 and 2015, as cited by the Cato Institute.

But there are some surprising exceptions to the list of banned countries. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt are all countries whose citizens have killed American citizens (the bulk of them in the 9/11 attacks) and who have business ties to President Trump. And yet there was no mention of these countries in the previous immigration travel ban or in the new version that is expected in coming days. Based on precedent, it seems as if this travel ban has very little to do with maintaining our safety and much more to do with targeting arbitrarily named countries to give us the illusion of safety.

Some, including those within my own Chaldean Christian community of San Diego, mistakenly look upon the Trump immigration ban admirably. They see it as protection against those we tried so hard to flee from. These very Chaldean Christians would have been unable to gain citizenship had a Trump immigration ban been implemented during their processing period. It startles me to see how quickly many, especially those within my own community, are willing to turn our backs on those whose situations were not far from ours only a few years earlier.

In the coming days and weeks, the Trump administration will make the case for why this slightly refurbished ban is necessary. They will use fear as seen through fabricated events like the “Bowling Green massacre” or the “Sweden terror attacks.” They will try to appeal to our natural yearning for security. But as Americans, and as citizens of a nation founded on the backs of immigrants, it is our responsibility to resist.

My Chaldean Christian family came to the United States to practice its religion freely, to pursue liberty and to create a better life for itself and future generations. The processing for my family and millions of others like ours took years.

I worked to establish a nonprofit called the Minority Humanitarian Foundation (MHF), which helped to expedite processing for religious minorities in the war-torn Middle East. This put me face to face with the slow-churning machine of refugee processing. Some of the family members I helped in Iraq had waited for years just to receive an interview granting them a chance to reunite with their family members in the United States. The MHF was founded partly because the process for admittance was so rigorous and in many ways broken that many displaced by ISIS were left for dead by our very immigration system. But we cannot be fooled into believing that it is anything short of thorough.

It is time to come down from the lofty heights of Trump's imagination. This planned ban isn't about keeping us safe. In fact, all it achieves is empowering those who wish to hurt us. Building a wall to separate us from our neighbors — creating an immigration impasse between the outside world and ourselves — does not protect us. It makes us a target. I call on all citizens to not give into President Trump's immigration ban redo. Instead, let us open our hearts and our doors to those whose hope for a better life trumps the hatred and persecution of a past they so desperately seek to leave behind.