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Somali refugee's American dream on hold as Trump ban debated

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NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Somali refugee Asho Manangara Ibrahim has a dream. She wants to educate herself and her children in the United States. For 10 years she went through a rigorous process of interviews and screening and finally she was cleared to travel to the United States.

But Ibrahim's hopes have been dashed. The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday allowed the Trump administration to maintain its restrictive policy on refugees. The court agreed to an administration request to block a lower court ruling that would have eased the ban on refugees and allowed up to 24,000 refugees to enter the country before the end of October.

Ibrahim, a 30-year-old mother of four children, escaped war-torn Somalia in 2007 after three men forced their way into her house and assaulted her.

She trekked for three days with her 2-year-old daughter to reach the sprawling Dadaab refugee camp in neighboring Kenya where she stayed for three years. She was relocated to Kakuma refugee camp where she learned that she could apply to be resettled in a third country. By the time she was cleared to travel to the U.S. on July 19, she had three other children from a second marriage.

After years of patiently waiting to be resettled, the news that she may not be allowed into the U.S. because of the Trump administration restrictions has devastated her.

"I feel shocked. I forget things now," she told The Associated Press last month through an interpreter.

She and her three daughters and small son pass their days in a makeshift home of mud walls, sticks and battered sheets. The children sit on woven plastic rugs covering a cracked-earth floor amid the barest of possessions: plastic water jugs, metal basins, a simple stove.

Ibrahim is one of about 500 people among the hundreds of thousands in Kenyan refugee camps who are ready for resettlement in the U.S. but are now stranded, said Jennifer Sime, senior vice president with the International Rescue Committee, an organization that helps resettlements.

The fear and rhetoric that refugees are a security threat or terrorists looking to infiltrate the U.S. are unfounded, Sime said.

"The probability of dying from an act of terrorism committed by a refugee is unbelievably low. Refugees have not perpetrated terrorist acts," she said. The chance of being murdered in a terrorist attack committed by a refugee is one in 3.64 billion a year, she added, citing 2016 figures from the Cato Institute.

Globally about 45,000 refugees have been approved for resettlement in the U.S. and 2,000 are ready to board planes but this has been put on hold, Sime said. Many gave away their hard-earned belongings to start a new life, she said.

Tuesday's court order was not the last word on the travel policy that President Donald Trump rolled out in January. The Supreme Court justices are scheduled to hear arguments on Oct. 10 on the legality of the bans on refugees anywhere in the world and on travelers from six mostly Muslim countries.

It's unclear, though, what will be left for the court to decide. The 90-day travel ban lapses in late September and the 120-day refugee ban will expire a month later.

The Trump administration has yet to say whether it will seek to renew the bans, make them permanent or expand the travel ban to other countries.

For now Ibrahim, like many in limbo, must wait to see if her American dream of education for her family will become a reality.