



Families win, refugees lose as Trump's misguided travel ban bounces on

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President Trump's travel ban has volleyed back and forth in court like a Wimbledon tennis ball, but last month the Supreme Court finally and unanimously ruled in favor of it.

The court found Trump's second executive order within a president's purview, after the first was shot down in lower courts thanks in part to the Washington state Attorney General's office.

Trump cited national security risks when he temporarily banned residents of seven Muslim-majority countries (later modified to six) from entering the U.S.

After the high court intervened, it included an exemption for persons with bona fide relationships or close ties to school or employment. The wording caused instant confusion.

Even before Trump could tweet triumphantly, lawyers and activists were wondering out loud: What constitutes a "bona fide relationship"?

The Trump team defined it as "parent, spouse, fiancé, child, sibling, son-or daughter-in-law or parent-in-law." Grandparents and grandchildren were conspicuously absent. U.S. District Judge Derrick Watson of Hawaii took note and ordered a temporary block of the ban.

Indeed, it was a glaring omission in a country that loudly espouses the value of grandparents. Ten percent of U.S. grandparents have lived with at least one grandchild, and 7.3 million grandchildren under 18 look to a grandparent to provide basic needs.

The case was lobbed back to the Supreme Court, and in a 6-3 decision last week, it gave a wider definition of "bona fide." Striking a blow for good sense and extended families, it ruled that grandparents, grandchildren, in-laws, aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews were now travel-worthy.

It's great news for proud immigrant families like that of Yunus Peshtaz of Puyallup. He came to Puyallup High School in 1974 as a foreign exchange student, later fled Afghanistan and raised a family in Puyallup, and has since helped 37 relatives become U.S. citizens after fleeing Taliban extremists.

The bad news was that the court upheld restrictions on refugees with arrangements to resettle here before the travel ban. An estimated 24,000 people with formal assurances from a U.S. resettlement agency are in limbo.

Scott Ellis, outreach manager for World Relief Seattle, says his agency successfully resettled 1,200 refugees into the greater Seattle-Tacoma last year; he anticipates those numbers will now be down 40 percent.

Not since World War II has the global refugee crisis been so dire, yet Trump has cut the number allowed into our country annually by more than half. It now stands at 50,000.

According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, 65.6 million people around the world have been forcibly removed from their homes; more than half are alone and under age 18.

Our country's moral capital is depleted for each of those sojourners who is screened, offered resettlement, then turned away.

The president would have us believe that opening the door puts national security at risk. But a terrorism analysis conducted by the conservative Cato Institute showed the number of people from his banned countries (Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and Pakistan) who killed on U.S. soil between 1975 and 2015 was zero.

Meanwhile, Trump incongruously proposes to strip the counterterrorism budget by more than half a billion dollars and take away three-quarters of the funds for a program that places officers in airports.

Republican Sens. John McCain and Lindsey Graham previously said in a joint statement that the travel ban "may do more to help terrorist recruitment than improve our security."

We don't disagree. The executive order on a few Muslim countries fails to recognize the nature of global terrorism: Islamic State and Al-Qaida are constantly evolving. Affiliate groups exist throughout the world.

If you want to flush out toxic ideology, the first step would not be targeting Muslim-majority countries and then dissembling as Trump did: "It's not a Muslim ban, but we're totally prepared."

The Supreme Court has yet to delve into the most controversial part of his ban, namely that it was motivated by anti-Muslim sentiment. Two cases in Virginia and California point to blanket bigotry in Trump's campaign rhetoric. The Supreme Court will rule on that piece in October.

For now, Trump can take satisfaction that his authority has been upheld.

Somewhere in a U.S. airport, a harmless grandmother from Somalia or Yemen can be glad she will reunite with her family.

But thousands of displaced refugees fleeing the very terrorism our president says he wants to eradicate? Their faith in the American dream must grow more dim by the day.