

## **Travel ban: An egregious mistake that will haunt U.S.**

Protesters gather at the San Diego International Airport to protest President Trump's travel ban.

Shawn VanDiver

During his first week in office, President Trump signed a series of executive orders pertaining to refugees, visas and immigration. Although presented under the guise of “national security,” make no mistake about it: these policies undermine American pluralism and are inconsistent with the values that make our nation great. They do absolutely nothing to enhance the security of American citizens and, in fact, introduce a number of redundant, unnecessary, and cruel bureaucratic hurdles to those here and abroad who view our country as a beacon of hope and prosperity.

The most egregious order bans Syrian refugees indefinitely and blocks entry into the U.S. for citizens from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. This order is an affront to common decency, and San Diegans should recognize that we can stay safe and welcome refugees at the same time. Anyone, including President Trump, who claims otherwise is being both deceitful about our capabilities as a powerful country and cruel to the most vulnerable people in the world.

After all, the U.S. has a rigorous process for vetting refugees that is tightly controlled by our intelligence community. Following an initial screening process by the United Nations, U.S. agencies like the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and State Department take over. These agencies use overlapping and repetitive methods, including extensive interviews, health checks, biometric data analysis, and background checks, to dive into refugees’ backgrounds. Syrian refugees in particular must undergo additional steps of security clearing — the entire process can take an average of 18 to 24 months to complete, and it sometimes lasts longer than three years.

To state it simply, the system is exhaustive, and it works — President Trump’s Muslim ban, on the other hand, definitively does not. In fact, the executive order harms our national security by providing a recruiting tool for the very terrorists we must defeat and damaging the relationship our nation has with any future allies. Moreover, it does not make any sense.

Set aside the fact that the executive order, using the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, as its rationale, does not ban those who share a nationality with any of the hijackers. The list is something of a mystery; there have been zero deaths caused by immigrants from its seven countries since 1975, and it conveniently exempts several countries where the Trump family happens to conduct business, including Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates.

The real problem, however, is that there exists no magical list of countries — Muslim-majority or otherwise — from which banning travelers could keep us perfectly safe from any future attack. This ban of desperate refugees and innocent immigrants is ultimately an empty gesture that will do nothing but embarrass the U.S. on the world stage and alienate many of the very people we rely upon as partners in the fight against ISIL.

For we have promised those who work alongside us abroad a home in the U.S. due to the abuse and risk of death they face for helping us. Yet even if they get their visas, their families are left behind for a time and therefore remain vulnerable to those who may wish them harm for aiding the U.S.

The truth is that these patriots, these men and women who sacrifice their safety and their lives to help defeat our enemies, should not have to wait for a visa. They should be welcomed as soon as their service is done. When American forces leave their region, they shouldn’t be left to a devastated country and potential death. We absolutely must get this right in future conflicts or we run the risk of missing out on valuable intelligence and regional context.

Now with our government failing to uphold our promises to our allies, it falls to all of us to prove ourselves.

We must offer those suffering abroad another choice — one apart radicalism or death and instead founded in safety, opportunity and prosperity.

We must offer those who would come to our country, whether just for a visit or to start a new life here, that which we have always offered immigrants from around the world: a chance to succeed on their merits and live up to our values.

By choosing this American way over fear and hate, we provide a powerful moral rebuke to the administration's draconian, xenophobic policies and make our nation stronger through our defense of our founding values of freedom, equality and inclusivity. We must honor our promise to the world.

I encourage you to join more than 350 veterans from across the nation to tell President Trump to rescind this order. Sign the letter today at [www.honourourpromise.org](http://www.honourourpromise.org)

*VanDiver is a Navy veteran, director of the Truman National Security Project's San Diego Chapter, and serves as an advisor to No One Left Behind. Twitter: @ShawnJVanDiver*

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