

January 25, 2017

MUSLIM BAN: History Repeating Itself?

Dear Friends,

The current news cycle is reporting that President Trump will soon issue an executive order temporarily banning all travel to the U.S. by men, women and children from seven predominantly Muslim countries and precluding most refugees from entering our country. While it appears that these bans will be time-limited for most, they may be indefinite when it comes to Syrian refugees.

In the name of freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and basic human decency, Tanenbaum calls on President Trump to refuse to issue an executive order that would bar a single religious group from entering the United States.

This potential policy bears the harrowing hallmark of U.S. treatment toward refugees during the Holocaust. Then and now, such policies—even if short-lived—can amount to a death sentence. During World War II, the U.S. turned away thousands of Jewish men, women and children fleeing imminent extinction in Europe, fearing they might be “Nazi spies.” Upon return home, actual Nazis sent these innocent individuals to Auschwitz to die. Their only crime: being Jewish.

Today, the refugees are people fleeing terror, whether from terrorist groups like ISIS and Al-Shabaab, or from governments that slaughter their citizens as collateral damage. Even if there is an executive order that makes an exception for persecuted religious minorities, such as the many Christians suffering in the Middle East, every indication is that this would not include the Muslims who are also living in imminent danger—in Syria, Iraq, and elsewhere in the Middle East and Africa. Their only crime: being Muslim.

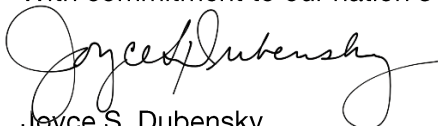
Terror does not discriminate, but a ban like this would make the U.S. a nation that does.

Equally alarming, a ban on Muslims with visas or those seeking them would have consequences that most Americans would not support. Students currently in the U.S. would not be able to visit their families abroad, because they might not be allowed to return. Muslim U.S. citizens awaiting the arrival of a spouse or other loved one might not be able to reunite. Fears of deportation and internment would heighten for Muslims living in the U.S. And all Americans, not just those from the Muslim community, would be further disconnected, as unfounded stereotypes about our Muslim neighbors become the law of our land.

And the refugees. While strong safeguards must be in place to identify those that are a threat, we must remember that, whether Jews from Europe during the 1940s or Muslims from the Middle East and Africa today, we are talking about innocent men and women just like us, who seek only to save their lives, and the lives of their children, by finding a safe-haven in a nation founded in the name of religious freedom.

Our government’s decision to deny refuge for Jews, who left their homes out of desperation, will forever remain a stain on America’s claim to being a moral compass. Let us not make the same mistake again.

With commitment to our nation's values,



Joyce S. Dubensky
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