

Network Against Islamophobia (NAI) UPDATES:

In addition to our curricula and resources, we will share NAI updates that respond to the current moment.

SOME BACKGROUND REGARDING TRUMP'S RECENT AND ANTICIPATED ANTI-MUSLIM EXECUTIVE ORDERS

January 31, 2017

The Ban on Visa Issuances to Applicants from Seven Muslim-Majority Countries

The United States has a long history of exclusionary immigration policies, most often related to race and racism. These [include](#): (1) the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act; (2) the 1917 Immigrant Act, which excluded all immigrants from Asia; (3) the Quota Act of 1921, which cut the number of southern and eastern European immigrants; (4) the 1924 quota, which limited Jewish emigres in the 1930s and 1940s; (5) the 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act, which—while supposedly eliminating race as a bar to immigration or citizenship—kept Asian quotas very low, ensured that 85% of immigrants would come from northern and western Europe, and tightened restrictions to “stem the tide of black West Indians entering under Britain's generous quota”; and (6) the 2001 Patriot Act, which, in its expansion of the type of immigrants who, due to alleged “terrorist” activities, could not be admitted to this country or could be deported from it, targeted Muslim, Arab, and South Asian communities.

The “Threat” of Refugees

A 2017 Cato Institute [review](#) of “foreign-born people who committed or were convicted of attempting to commit a terrorist attack on U.S. soil from 1975 through 2015” found that those from the seven countries on the administration’s temporary ban list (Syria, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen) had contributed to zero American deaths. Of foreign-born “terrorists” responsible for American deaths on U.S. soil, 94.1% came from countries not targeted by the administration—Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirate. The Cato review estimates the odds of being killed by a refugee terrorist as one in 3.6 *billion*. It also notes: “Of the 3,252,493 refugees admitted from 1975 to the end of 2015, 20 were terrorists, which amounted to 0.00062 percent of the total. Of the 20, only three were successful in their attacks, killing a total of three people.”

Why Target These Seven Countries? (Note: We oppose targeting any countries)

While many have [pointed](#) out that Trump excluded from the temporary ban list numerous Muslim-majority countries in which he has business interests, [Glenn Greenwald](#) views the ban as the “culmination of [a] war on terror mentality.” As he writes,

“The reality is that his highly selective list reflects longstanding U.S. policy: Indeed, [Obama restricted visa rights](#) for these same seven countries, and the regimes in Riyadh and Cairo have received special U.S. protection for decades, long before Trump.

. . . what primarily shapes Trump’s list is U.S. aggression: Five of the seven predominantly Muslim countries on Trump’s list were [ones bombed by Obama](#), while the other two (Iran and Sudan) were [punished with heavy sanctions](#). Thus, Trump is banning immigrants from the very countries that the U.S. government — under both Republicans and Democrats — has played a key role in destabilizing and destroying, as Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy, with surprising candor, noted this week . . .

Who Are the “Terrorists”?

“The default assumption remains,” as Arun Kundnani writes in [The Muslims Are Coming! Islamophobia, Extremism, and the Domestic War on Terror](#), “that the term ‘terrorist’ is reserved for acts of political violence carried out by Muslims.” A case in point is Joseph Stack, who, driven by his anti-tax, anti-government ideology, flew an airplane in 2010 into an Austin, Texas building that included regional IRS offices, resulting in the death of an IRS employee and the wounding of 13 others. As Glenn Greenwald [writes](#), “The attack had all of the elements of iconic terrorism, a model for how it’s most commonly understood: down to flying a plane into the side of a building. But Stack was white and non-Muslim. As a result, not only was the word ‘terrorism’ not applied to Stack, but it was [explicitly declared inapplicable](#) by media outlets and government officials alike.” This attack received a fraction of the media attention than the exact same ideologically motivated act of a Muslim would have gotten.

The government and the media focus disproportionately on violence by Muslims, despite the [numerous studies](#) that have found a growing threat of violence from right-wing extremists. In the 15-year years after 9/11, “[118 people](#) in the United States have been killed by terror attacks perpetrated by Muslim-Americans.” A 2013 report on “America’s Violent Far Right” from the [Combating Terrorism Center at West Point](#), using a consolidated database to track the political violence of the racist/white supremacist, anti-federalist, and (Christian) fundamentalist movements, found that, in the decade after 9/11, far-right attacks averaged 337 attacks per year, killing 254 people. The number has [increased](#) since then. (Such terrorism has a long history in this country: a 2015 [report](#) from Alabama’s Equal Justice Initiative reports that, in twelve Southern

states, 3,959 Black people were lynched from 1877 to 1950, over 700 more lynchings than previous researchers had found.)

The “Values” Test for Obtaining Visas

The test for Muslims from majority-Muslim countries trying to obtain a visa to the United States rests on the deeply Islamophobic assumptions that Islam is a [violent ideology](#), not a religion. The administration is promoting views that have long been put forth by a [network](#) of anti-Muslim ideologues who are now [well-represented](#) in the current administration. The concept of an ideological test to get into the United States is hardly new. This past summer, Trump linked it—as if it were a good thing—to similar tests during the Cold War. For Trump and his ilk, who believe that there is a “[clash of civilizations](#),” the threat to the United States has morphed from Communism to Islam, from the “Red Scare” to the “[Green Scare](#).” This framing and parallel with the visa-exclusion and witch-hunting years of the McCarthy era during the mid-20th century are, quite obviously, chilling.

The Recent Precursor of the “Muslim Registry”

Although Trump has not announced the creation of a “Muslim Registry” (a prominent campaign promise), the establishment of such a registry would not be new. It is critical to remember that, as human rights attorney [Diala Shamas](#) has pointed out, “for the past 14 years, authorities have steadily and silently implemented variants of the proposed Muslim exclusion.” Most notably, the NSEERS (National Security Entry Exit Registration System) Program, begun in 2002, required the registration of male noncitizens over the age of 16 from 24 Muslim-majority countries plus North Korea to register and be interrogated, photographed, and fingerprinted. Although no terrorism-related [convictions](#) resulted from NSEERS, the program registered over 80,000 men, placed about 13,000 in deportation hearings, and detained many others.

The Network Against Islamophobia (NAI), a project of Jewish Voice for Peace, was created to serve as a resource to, and work with, JVP chapters and other groups interested in organizing against Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism and to be a partner to the broader, Muslim-led movement against Islamophobia. Please [visit our page](#) to learn more, download resources, and get involved. You can contact us at NAI@JVP.ORG