

Advocacy Guide for Mobilizing Against Trump's Immigration Policy in Canada

WHAT HAPPENED, AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

On January 27, 2017, United States President Donald Trump signed an Executive Order entitled "Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States."

The Order immediately changed the lives of thousands of people both in the United States and around the world by (among other things):

- 1) Blocking "the immigrant and nonimmigrant entry into the United States" of citizens from Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Sudan and Libya for a 90-day period. Countries may be added to this list. During this 90-day period, the United States will determine what information it requires from each country to conduct the so-called "extreme vetting" of immigrant and nonimmigrant entrants.

This means: as of January 30, nonimmigrant visa holders from the banned countries will not be able to enter or re-enter the country, and citizens of these countries will not be able to get visas to enter the US. US green card holders may be subject to further scrutiny. Canadian permanent residents and Canadians with dual citizenship with one of the banned countries have now been told that they will not be affected, but there is still some confusion around this point as the Trump administration has changed its position several times.

- 2) Suspending the United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for 120 days, and reducing the number of refugees admissible to the United States to 50,000 for fiscal year 2017. If/when the USRAP is brought back, it will prioritize the claims of refugees based on "religious persecution" as long as they are religious minorities in their country of origin.

This means: thousands of refugees from all over the world who had already been screened in a rigorous two year screening process, and approved to settle in the United States no longer have anywhere to go. Thousands more will no longer be able to apply for refugee resettlement in the United States, narrowing their options and limiting the number of international spaces for the resettlement of millions of people displaced by war or persecution across the world. If/when USRAP is re-opened, the United States has signalled that it will favour Christian refugees over Muslim ones, and cut the total number of refugees it will accept in half.

- 3) Suspending the entry of Syrian refugees to the United States indefinitely.

This means: thousands of Syrian refugees that were already screened and cleared to come to the United States no longer have anywhere to go. The United States will stop playing a role in the resettlement of 4.9 million Syrians currently displaced by war, including those waiting to leave refugee camps across Europe.

- 4) Tracking and publishing data on the number of "terrorism", "gender-based violence against women", and "major" offences committed by "foreign nationals" every 6 months.

This means: the United States will track and publicize the behaviour of immigrants and refugees in a way that highlights criminality rather than productivity, and treats them differently from the way the rest of the population is treated. It is also a policy that propagates harmful rhetoric and a damaging and false image of the supposed danger posed by certain groups.

WHAT DOES THIS HAVE TO DO WITH CANADA?

In Canada, there have been recent documented cases of people risking their lives to cross our borders. This is not a new phenomenon and will likely increase as a result of the Executive Order and the general anti-immigrant and islamophobic sentiment being stoked, not only in the United States, but around the world and here in Canada.

In 2004, Canada and the United States implemented what is called the Safe Third Country Agreement, which (with a few exceptions), denies people from making refugee claims at our shared borders, if they have landed in either country first. This has the effect of compelling people to make the difficult and scary decision to cross the border in an irregular manner. We Canadians, through our government, can reverse this discriminatory agreement which would allow people to make their refugee claims at our border, safely and without fear.

People who are fleeing war and persecution should be afforded the opportunity to make a claim for sanctuary in Canada, without risking their lives in doing so.

This policy implemented by President Trump is based on blatant racism, bigotry and Islamophobia, disguised as a concern for national security. It is not merely a US domestic policy issue, but an international human rights issue. To say nothing sends the message to Canadians and the world that this is acceptable. If, as Prime Minister Trudeau says, “diversity is our strength”, Canada must send a clear message that we will stand up in the face of discrimination and hatred both as individuals and as a nation.

To date, the Canadian government has not denounced the United States policy as discriminatory.

Aside from the message it sends, the Executive Order will have an immediate practical impact on an already desperate global refugee crisis. The United States has stepped back from its obligations to participate in resettlement efforts, leaving thousands of families in the lurch and others with fewer options than before. Canada is uniquely positioned to step up.

To date, Canada has not committed to taking any steps to increase its commitment to refugee resettlement, or to ensure that refugees who are now inadmissible to the United States can make safe passage into Canada.

There are multiple organizations and associations that have already made public statements on the issue of rescinding the Safe Third Country Agreement. We have been greatly informed and inspired by these statements. You can find links to their statements here:

[The Canadian Council for Refugees](#)

[The Canadian Civil Liberties Association](#)

[Multi-Faith Clergy](#)

[The Canadian Tech Community](#)

WHAT CAN YOU DO FROM CANADA?

There are a number of suggested actions that Canadians can take to make our voices heard on this subject. We have compiled a list and encourage people to suggest others.

1. CALL on our government for immediate action to assist refugees endangered by the actions of the United States. Appeal to your MP, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship requesting the immediate review and removal of the designation of the United States as a "safe third country" under the Safe Third Country Agreement, and to give asylum to those refugees who are now barred from admission to the US by the Executive Order. If you need some help getting started, you can:

- a) Use the sample message below in your letter or voicemail to the government;
- b) Sign and circulate the [No One is Illegal petition](#).

2. DEMAND that Canada responds in accordance with our commitment to human rights. Appeal to your MP and the PMO to denounce the actions of the United States as threats to equality and human rights both at home and across the world using twitter. You can tag your MP (find their twitter handle by using the search function on twitter), the Prime Minister (@JustinTrudeau) and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship (@AhmedDHussen)

3. ASK those who represent you to stand up. Appeal to the professional, trade union or community organizations in your life to take a vocal position against all forms of discrimination, including the recent actions of the United States. You can share the wording of the documents that we have provided above.

4. SUPPORT advocacy groups who are fighting discriminatory policies, and organizations that serve refugees. Make a financial donation to the [UNHCR](#), the Canadian Council for Refugees, or your [local refugee clinic or support centre](#).

5. BE an ally and not a bystander. Recognizing that refugee rights and islamophobia are human rights issues, call out and respond to misinformation and alarmism when you see it. Stand up for the rights of all humans in your life by refusing to stay silent in the face of hatred and discrimination.

6. TALK to your friends and family and ask them to do the same! Commit to sending this document to five (5) people and keeping the conversation going about these issues as they unfold.

7. JOIN or organize a protest! Show your friends, family and the rest of the country that you care by peaceful demonstration and solidarity.

8. START a talking circle in order to discuss issues of injustice. These circles can be a source of strength, hope and information. Talking circles can encourage those who are hesitant to act to take action and speak up.

9. SHARE your actions publicly using social media (Facebook, twitter, instagram, snapchat). You can use the hashtag #WelcomeToCanada to connect to the growing interest in this subject. Share photos or videos of yourself sending a letter to your MP, the Prime Minister and/or the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, or attending protests/taking action on social media.

10. APPROACH your local newspaper/radio station. Tell them about the actions you are taking and offer to invite them to your letter writing session, protest, phone calls. Small and large communities have media who would be interested in covering your story, so give them a call, or tag them on social media.

SAMPLE EMAIL OR VOICEMAIL MESSAGE

Here are some ideas for what you can put in a letter or say in a voicemail to your MP. Remember, snail mail to an MP can be sent without postage! Don't forget to include your name and address. Try to add something personal to your message about why this issue matters to you.

Hon. Ahmed Hussen
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
ahmed.hussen@parl.gc.ca

Right Hon. Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister
justin.trudeau@parl.gc.ca

To find your MP, [enter your postal code here](#).

[YOUR NAME]
[YOUR ADDRESS]

Dear Minister Hussen:

I am writing to you as a Canadian and constituent of [INSERT RIDING] who is gravely concerned, saddened and frightened by the recent events in the United States, including most recently the Executive Order signed by President Trump on January 27, 2017 concerning the admissibility of persons from Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen and Libya.

I would like you to know that it matters very much to me that you take a decisive stand against this discriminatory and hateful act. Specifically, I ask you to:

1. Denounce the Executive Order as discriminatory and contrary to Canadian values;
2. Review and remove the designation of the United States as a "safe third country" under the Safe Third Country Agreement on the basis that the Executive Order violates the non-discrimination provision of the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees (Article 3); and
3. Take immediate steps to offer refugee protection to those refugees already screened and cleared for admission to the United States, who are no longer able to be resettled there, including by raising the levels of overseas refugees admissible into Canada in 2017 to the extent necessary.

I believe that our national and individual characters are being tested by recent events. I hope sincerely that you will act with courage and conviction, knowing that the citizens and residents you serve are relying on you to carry us through these difficult times without compromising Canada's identity as a nation that values diversity, equality and protection .

Yours very truly,

[YOUR NAME]

c. Right Hon. Justin Trudeau, PM
[YOUR MP's NAME]