

# Statement of the Oakland, California Faith Trio on President Trump's Executive Order to Ban Muslims and Refugees

February 5, 2017

- In the name of God, the most compassionate and merciful.
- In the name of the values we hold most dear.

The Faith Trio, composed of representatives of the Islamic Cultural Center of Northern California (ICCNC), Kehilla Community Synagogue and Montclair Presbyterian Church, condemns President Donald Trump's Executive Order to ban the entry of visitors and refugees from seven Muslim countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen to the United States. Although this executive order does not explicitly name Muslims, its targeting of immigrants from predominantly Muslim countries clearly affects that faith above all others. The additional favoritism shown to religious minorities in predominantly Muslim countries is a further insult. We find this discrimination offensive to our sense of fairness, to our relationships with people of those countries, to the core values we recognize as inherent to Islam, to the humility demanded of us by our faith traditions, and to the Constitution's anti-establishment clause.

The Faith Trio is proud of our common Abrahamic traditions. The texts of each of our faiths inform us that we are under a divine command to defend the vulnerable, and to recognize the dignity and needs of the outsider in the interest of creating a beloved community or *umma*. This Order is totally contradictory to the values of our common tradition.

Moreover, we find it to be un-American, immoral, illogical, unjust, and damaging to the national interest of the United States.

**1. This Executive Order is un-American.** The order undermines the freedom of religion, a principle that is among the core value of our American democracy and has elevated our nation above others. It is also un-American because America is a nation that was founded by immigrants fleeing religious persecution. Thus, banning anyone based on their faith, or ethnicity runs contrary to our nation's founding values, our Constitution, and our basic notion of human rights, which America has championed.

**2. This Executive Order is immoral.** As stated above, the order is contrary to our religious traditions. Moreover, the order targets some of the most vulnerable people in the world--refugees who are fleeing unspeakable violence. The U.S. has particular moral obligation to help people from Syria and Iraq since failed U.S. policies in the Middle East region have contributed to the current situation. As a result of the war in Syria, 4.8 million Syrian refugees now live in neighboring countries. The United States, which has a population of 325 million, has accepted only 12,500 Syrian refugees in 2016. This is a paltry figure when compared to the 39,000 refugees taken in by Canada, a country with a population of only 36 million. The U.S. has abandoned its moral obligation and is now completely shutting the door of hope on these refugees.

**3. This Executive Order is illogical** – The EO has little relevance to its purported goal of preventing terrorists from entering the United States. Experts on terrorism tell us that since the

horrific events of 9/11, no one in the U.S. has died in a terrorist attack perpetrated by individuals from these seven Muslim countries. There have been only three non-deadly cases in which the perpetrators were lone wolves from these countries. Moreover, the U.S. currently has a rigorous vetting process for all refugees and visitors from these seven countries, who are subject to the highest level of multi-agency security checks of any traveler category to the United States.

**4. The Executive Order is unjust** – The order punishes refugees and visitors from these seven countries that had already received their visas. These individuals have already gone through the existing, rigorous vetting process and spent considerable time, money, energy, and emotion to obtain their visas. For many refugees especially, their lives have been on hold up to three years to receive their visas, a written promise by the U.S. government to allow them enter America. Now the promise and hope of building a new life have all been erased by this Executive Order. Additionally, those individuals already residing in the States on a legal visa who were unfortunate to be outside of the U.S. at the time of the EO are being turned away from the place they have come to call their home, where many have families, children, friends, homes, jobs, etc. Many students pursuing higher education in the US have also been affected by this ban. This has inflicted enormous harm to these people without any benefits to the national security.

**5. This Executive Order damages the national interests of the United States.** This order damages the national interest of the U.S. It makes the U.S. looking small, afraid, unjust, and hostile to foreign visitors and immigrants. The EO has alienated allies, including Iraq, provided propaganda fodder for terrorist networks that frequently portray U.S. involvement in the Middle East as a religious crusade, and endangered critical information exchange with Muslim allies. Moreover, it damages American leadership in higher education. An open letter signed by more than 18,000 academics and counting, including 50 Nobel laureates warns that Trump's order "significantly damages American leadership in higher education and research" and calls it "inhumane, ineffective, and un-American."

The Faith Trio therefore commits to resisting the aims of this Executive Order. We commit to serving the needs of the communities and individuals jeopardized or threatened by the Order, and to support efforts to overturn it.

We pray for the strength to act on our commitments to welcome the stranger, to love the outsider, and to enable their integration into the community of citizens and residents of the United States.