

LGBT Refugees and President Trump's Refugee Ban Executive Order

President Trump's Executive Order

President Trump signed a revised executive order on March 6 in response to a court-ordered stay of his January 27 order that barred the resettlement of refugees and nationals of seven countries, among other provisions. The language of the new executive order will continue to have a severe negative impact on vulnerable refugee populations, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. The revised order goes into effect on March 16 and will:

- Halt the refugee admissions program for a minimum of 120 days. The suspension of processing ensures refugees will not be eligible for entry for the foreseeable future;
- Bar entry by "immigrant and nonimmigrant" nationals from six Muslim-majority countries—Libya, Iran, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen—for 90 days, and potentially longer. The order excludes U.S. legal permanent residents, dual-citizens, and certain existing visa holders. Countries can be added or removed from this list after the 90 days. Iraq, which was included in the prior order, has been removed; and,
- Reduce refugee admissions from 110,000 per year to only 50,000.

LGBT People and the Executive Order

The order—and any similar efforts to halt resettlement—will prevent many individuals fleeing oppression due to their sexual orientation or gender identity from reaching safety in the United States.

Persecution Prompting Need for Refuge

LGBT status is explicitly criminalized in over seventy countries, including all six countries whose nationals are banned from entry through the executive order. LGBT people in Yemen, Sudan, Iran, and Somalia can face the death penalty. In all six countries, LGBT people face a climate of societal and institutionalized homophobia. Many LGBT people are persecuted by multiple actors, including their families, state forces, and terrorist groups such as ISIS.

Safety in Frontline Host Countries

LGBT people around the world are forced to flee their homes due to persecution based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Because many of these individuals face rejection from their families, they flee alone and do not have a support system in the host countries where they await resettlement.

They also encounter rejection in refugee camps and institutionalized homophobia in host countries. In Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan—frontline host countries in the global refugee crisis—LGBT people face marginalization and hostility. As in many parts of the world, transgender people are particularly vulnerable to violence. Due to the extreme risks and persecution that LGBT people face even in refugee-hosting countries, they are sometimes identified as vulnerable and in need of resettlement.

Cases of homophobic attacks against LGBT refugees underscore the dangers they face in refugee-hosting countries. In July 2016, a gay Syrian refugee was beheaded in Turkey. Prior to his murder, he had received threats and had been kidnapped and raped.

Putting LGBT Refugees at Greater Risk

Halting the refugee admissions program—or the resettlement of refugees from the targeted Muslim-majority countries—leaves vulnerable LGBT refugees awaiting resettlement to face violence, discrimination, and even death. For those already cleared for resettlement, medical and security clearances are likely to expire during the 120-day pause, meaning an even longer wait in unsafe conditions.

Slashing Admissions Leaves More Refugees Vulnerable

The world is facing the largest displacement crisis since World War II. Yet, less than 1 percent of refugees are resettled.

Cutting the total of number of refugees who will be admitted into the United States in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 by more than half from 110,000 to 50,000 drastically reduces the ability to resettle vulnerable refugees, including LGBT refugees. As of March 1, 2017, more than 37,000 refugees had been admitted to the U.S. in FY17, leaving less than 13,000 slots for refugee admissions this fiscal year. ●
