

February 1, 2017

As past and present members of the faculty of the Jewish Studies Program at the University of Pittsburgh, we protest the executive order issued by President Trump denying entry into the United States for the next 90 days to citizens of seven Muslim countries: Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen.

As scholars of Jewish history and culture we are well aware of the denial of entry into the United States to Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler, and are outraged that fellow human beings, refugees from Syria who are fleeing war and death, are not being welcomed here. The offense to the lessons of history is intensified by the fact that President Trump signed these executive orders on Holocaust Remembrance Day, the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. We are shocked by proposals of a future religious test for entry into the United States.

As the Chancellor of our University recently stated, “Our country was founded by individuals escaping from persecution based on their religion. Our government was founded on a belief that ‘all men are created equal.’ We are a nation of immigrants whose history was enriched by the waves of immigrants crossing onto our shores. Similarly, the University of Pittsburgh is built on a foundation of values that rejects discrimination and embraces diversity as essential to the tasks of education and discovery. Our University’s remarkable success story has been written by individuals who came from all over the world—by men and women who shared all types of religious beliefs. They came to Pittsburgh to learn, to teach, to discover, and to serve. Without question, we are a better university because of them.”

This executive order and some of the additional proposals to severely restrict the movement of people on the basis of religion and national origin threaten not only human decency but the scholarly enterprise itself. Such actions make research and collaboration abroad more difficult and impede collaboration with academic researchers in other countries.

Along with colleagues around the country we demand that the United States government end this outrageous, misguided, and potentially unconstitutional policy immediately.

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