



US President Donald Trump speaks on the phone with Russia's President Vladimir Putin from the Oval Office of the White House on Jan 28, in Washington, DC. (Looking on from second left): White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus, National Security Advisor Michael Flynn, Vice-President Mike Pence, White House Press Security Sean Spicer, and Counselor to the President Stephen Bannon. (AFP)

Immigration

Merkel slams restrictions

'Trump immigration ban wasn't justified'

BERLIN, Jan 29, (Agencies): German Chancellor **Angela Merkel** on Sunday slammed the restrictions on immigration imposed by US President Donald Trump, saying it was "not justified" to target people based on their background or religion.

"The chancellor regrets the entry ban imposed by the US government against refugees and nationals from certain countries," her spokesman Steffen Seibert said in a statement.

"She is convinced that even in the necessarily resolute battle against terrorism it is not justified to place people from a certain origin or belief under general suspicion."

The German government "will now examine the consequences" of the ban for German citizens with dual nationality affected by the decision, he added.

Trump has caused consternation at home and abroad after signing a sweeping executive order on Friday suspending refugee arrivals and barring visas for travellers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen for the next three months.

A federal judge on Saturday blocked part of the ban, ordering authorities to stop deporting refugees and other travellers stuck at US airports.

Merkel's condemnation comes a day after she spoke by phone with the new US president, when they discussed a range of issues from relations with Russia to the situation in the Middle East and NATO.

Ban

Statements released by both sides after the call made no mention of the immigration ban, but Seibert on Sunday said Merkel had reminded the US of its human rights responsibilities.

"The Geneva Refugee Convention calls on the international community to take in war refugees on humanitarian grounds," he said.

"The chancellor stressed this policy in yesterday's phone call with the US president."

In an interview with European media earlier this month, Trump said Merkel had made a "catastrophic mistake" in allowing a record number of migrants into Germany. More than a million people, including hundreds of thousands from war-torn Syria, have arrived in Germany since the chancellor opened the country's doors to those fleeing conflict and persecution in 2015.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for Theresa May said the British Prime Minister does "not agree" with Trump's order and will challenge the US government if it has an adverse effect on British nationals. The official comment came after May refused to condemn the ban during a visit to Turkey to meet with Turkish leaders. She said in Turkey the decision was a matter solely for the US.

Meanwhile, nationalist and far-right groups in Europe applauded the US travel restrictions.

The Dutch anti-Islam populist Geert Wilders said in a tweet: "Well done @POTUS it's the only way to stay safe + free. I would do the same. Hope you'll add more Islamic countries like Saudi Arabia soon."

French President Francois Hollande vowed a "firm" response to a growing list of pronouncements by the maverick tycoon, including his encouragement for Brexit and suspension of all refugee arrivals.

Another EU founder member, Luxembourg, also said Trump risks bolstering "hatred towards the West" by slapping tight new controls on travellers from seven Muslim countries including war-wracked Syria.

Hollande spoke out a day after Trump — who has made clear he thinks other EU countries will leave the bloc — called Britain's exit from the European Union a "wonderful thing".

"When he talks about Brexit being a model for other countries, I think we must respond," the French leader told reporters on the sidelines of a summit of southern EU nations in Lisbon.



In this June 13, 2016 file photo, The Apple logo is shown on a screen at the Apple Worldwide Developers Conference in the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, in San Francisco. Google, Apple and other tech giants expressed dismay over an executive order on immigration from President Donald Trump that bars nationals of seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the US. (AP)

America

Silicon Valley denounces ban:

Silicon Valley heads have slammed US President Donald Trump's temporary ban on refugees and many Muslims from entering the United States, fearing it could prevent them from accessing a global reservoir of talent.

The sweeping immigration crackdown moved many tech bosses to criticize measures that could impact sector employees.

"Apple would not exist without immigration, let alone thrive and innovate the way we do," said **Tim Cook** in a memo to staff outlined by AFP.

The company's founder Steve Jobs was the son of a Syrian immigrant.

Netflix CEO Reed Hastings called the president's first week in office "very sad," saying in a Facebook post that "Trump's actions are hurting Netflix employees around the world, and are so un-American it pains us all."

"It is time to link arms together to protect American values of freedom and opportunity."

Nearly 200 Google employees are directly impacted by the measures, according to an internal memo from CEO Sundar Pichai.

"We're concerned about the impact of this order and any proposals that could impose restrictions on Googlers and their families, or that could create barriers to bringing great talent to the US," said the head of the internet giant.

Trump's headline executive order, signed Friday, suspends the arrival of refugees for at least 120 days, and for the next three months bars visas for travellers from seven Muslim-majority countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

Immigration law specialist Ava Benach — who told AFP she has been flooded with calls from clients — said those already in the US should stay put, and those abroad risk being blocked from boarding aircraft.

"I would advise against leaving the US because I don't believe that they will be able to return," she said.

As resistance to the temporary immigration restrictions mount, a US federal judge on Saturday ordered authorities to stop deporting refugees and other travellers stuck at US airports. (AFP)

Trudeau welcomes all immigrants:

Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** welcomed Canadian immigrants Saturday in a sunny Twitter message written in stark contrast to Donald Trump's order temporarily banning all refugees and many Muslims from traveling to the United States.

"To those fleeing persecution, terror & war, Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength

Immigration

'Trump destroyed my life ... my family life'

Visa ban sparks Muslim shock

TEHRAN, Jan 29, (AFP): Families split, a father unable to reach his son's wedding and officials warning of a "gift to extremists" — US President Donald Trump's visa ban on seven Muslim countries has triggered shock and confusion among those affected.

"There is mass hysteria among the Iranian-American community — that's no exaggeration," said Saam Borhani, an attorney in Los Angeles.

He said clients were bombarding him with questions since Friday, suspending an executive order on Friday, suspending refugee arrivals and imposing tough controls on travellers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

With more than one million Iranians living in the United States, the restrictions have already caused chaos for students, businessmen and families.

"I have several clients impacted by the executive order — married couples whose spousal visas have been stopped, causing them to be separated. A father living in Iran who is unable to come to his son's wedding in California," said Borhani, who was himself born in the US to Iranian parents.

US State Department figures show Iran accounted for around a quarter of the 31,804 visas granted to citizens from the seven countries last year.

Among thousands facing difficulties, an Iraqi family was barred in Cairo from taking their connecting flight to New York on Saturday.

Resigned

"I had sold my house, my car, my furniture. I resigned from work and so did my wife. I took my children out of school," Fuad Sharef, 51, told AFP.

"Donald Trump destroyed my life. My family's life. I used to think America was a state of institutions but it's as though it's a dictatorship," he said.

An Iranian woman blocked from boarding at Tehran airport on Sunday said she had waited 14 years for her green card.

"Even during the hostage crisis at the US embassy (in 1980), the US government didn't issue such an order. They say the US is the cradle of liberty. I don't see freedom in that country," she said, asking not to be named.

The US embassy in Baghdad said on Facebook that dual nationals from the seven countries would be barred from entering the United States, excluding those with American passports.

"DAESHI decision," Baghdad resident Nibal Athed wrote in response to the post, using the Arabic acronym for

Door shut on refugees, but will US be 'safer'?

WASHINGTON, Jan 29, (AP): US President Donald Trump says his halt to immigration from seven Muslim-majority nations and ban on refugees is being done in the name of national security. But it's not clear the measures will help prevent attacks on American soil, and they could wind up emboldening extremists who already view the US as at war with Islam.

Recent acts of deadly extremist violence have been carried out either by US citizens or by individuals whose families weren't from the nations singled out. And the list of countries in Trump's order doesn't include Saudi Arabia, where most of the Sept 11 hijackers were from, or other places with a more direct link to terrorism in America.

The admissions ban announced Friday also does not directly address a more urgent law enforcement concern: homegrown violent extremists already in the United States who plot their attacks without any overseas connections or contacts.

"The primary terrorism-related threat facing the US today comes from individuals living here who become inspired by what they see on the internet, who carry out attacks independent of any terrorist organization," said John Cohen, a former Department of Homeland Security counterterrorism official who worked in government under

Democratic and Republican administrations and who has been involved in refugee vetting policy.

The FBI has for years been concerned by the prospect of airplane bomb plots and terrorists dispatched from overseas to commit violence in America. But the ascendancy of the Islamic State, and the group's ability through slick and easily accessible propaganda to reach susceptible young Americans in all corners of the country, has been a more immediate challenge — and a more realistic danger — for counterterrorism officials than any threat posed by refugees from abroad.

"Dealing with that threat should be a top priority for this administration," Cohen said.

The executive order suspends refugee admissions for 120 days and bars all immigration for 90 days from Muslim-majority countries with terrorism concerns: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

It indefinitely bars the processing of refugees from Syria, a country that's been of particular concern to the FBI even though the number of Americans who have looked to travel there to fight with the Islamic State has been dwindling.

But the culprits of recent deadly terror attacks aren't linked to the countries singled out by Trump's order.

the Islamic State group.

He asked why the list excluded Afghanistan, Pakistan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, which he described as the "biggest sponsors of terrorism".

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said Sunday that Trump's move "will be recorded in history as a great gift to extremists and their supporters."

"Collective discrimination aids terrorist recruitment by deepening faultlines exploited by extremist demagogues to swell their ranks," he tweeted.

His ministry said earlier that it would reciprocate with a ban on Americans entering the country, though it will not apply to those who already have a valid visa.

Meanwhile, Yemen's Huthi rebels, who control the capital Sanaa, also

criticised the ban, stating: "All attempts to classify Yemen and its citizens as a probable source for terrorism and extremism is illegal and illegitimate."

Yemenis made up the largest contingent — 12,998 — of immigrants to the US last year from the seven countries.

The situation has been complicated by a US federal judge, who ordered authorities on Saturday to stop deporting refugees and other travellers stuck at US airports.

"Uncertainty is the key word. Things are changing quickly and we're trying to keep people updated," said Borhani, the lawyer in LA.

Getting a visa was already tough for Iranians, who had to travel to Turkey or the United Arab Emirates for the nearest US embassy.



Cook



Trudeau

#WelcomeToCanada," Trudeau posted on Twitter.

The message comes one day after Trump signed a sweeping executive order to suspend the arrival of refugees for at least 120 days and impose tough new controls on travelers from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen for the next three months.

Since then, travelers from those countries have been stopped from boarding

US-bound planes, triggering angry protests and detentions at airports.

Some who were already in the air when Trump signed the executive order were detained on arrival, The New York Times reported.

But a federal judge blocked part of the Republican's temporary immigration ban on Saturday, ordering authorities to stop deporting refugees and other travellers stuck at US airports. (AFP)