



INTERNATIONAL JOINT POLICY COMMITTEE OF THE SOCIETIES OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

Press Release—US Travel Ban

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Through executive order (“the Order”) of its President, the United States of America (USA) has changed its policy on travel and immigration, preventing some individuals, including scientists, from visiting the United States. As of March 15, 2017, the most recent Order will suspend the USA’s refugee program for 120 days, halt the issuing of new visas for 90 days to people from six Muslim-majority countries, and reduce the number of refugees allowed to enter the USA from 110,000 to 50,000 this year.

Representing 21-member societies of epidemiologists worldwide, the *International Joint Policy Committee of the Societies of Epidemiology* (IJPC-SE) is obligated to point out the serious implications of this Order for effectively promoting health and quickly responding to disease outbreaks.

The Order prevents travel for scientists and public health officials from six predominantly Muslim countries. The order threatens to erode the collaborative foundation of science and has already adversely impacted the work of scientists in these countries.

Diseases know no boundaries. The Order prevents travel of epidemiologists and scientists who are focused on eliminating suffering and death from preventable causes. The Order may increase poor health outcomes—particularly in war-torn countries which may need the most assistance. In addition, the prevention of travel also prevents the open exchange of observations and information vital to quickly and effectively respond to disease outbreaks.

The Order may also adversely hamper the ability of the USA to respond quickly to infectious disease outbreaks. Having epidemiologists in the USA with the cultural knowledge of countries which may need assistance is paramount to initiating an effective first response to outbreaks before they spread further. The public’s health is dependent on a functioning scientific research community that can respond quickly and work effectively across boundaries.

The Order erodes basic scientific principles of trust and the open exchange of ideas. The restricted movement of scientists based solely on their national, ethnic or religious affiliation is unjustified. The ban undermines the scientific work of our IJPC-SE member societies and other professional organizations. The Order erodes the trust and partnerships the USA has with leading scientific communities around the world.

The USA should continue to be a global leader in science and the open exchange of scientific ideas. Worldwide, professional societies are calling for a boycott of travel to the USA, which may further hamper the open exchange of scientific ideas. The IJPC-SE calls upon the USA to preserve the right of scientists to travel, collaborate, attend conferences, and enjoy free movement and information exchange within and throughout the USA.