Anthropology in the News

Professional anthropological organizations have been making statements about new policies being developed by the Trump Administration. Here is a compilation of links to and excerpts from these statements:
AAA Calls for Immediate Reversal of Executive Order Banning Immigrants

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) calls on the US government to immediately reverse its ill-informed, heavy-handed executive order suspending entry of all refugees to the United States for 120 days, barring Syrian refugees indefinitely, and blocking entry into the United States for 90 days for citizens of seven predominantly Muslim countries: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The Department of Homeland Security immediately began enforcing the order, including barring green card holders from those countries from re-entering the United States, with exceptions to be evaluated on a bureaucratically slow and inefficient case-by-case basis.

“The order must be rescinded, immediately, and the hateful cultural ignorance behind it must be named,” said AAA President Alisse Waterston.

Anthropology is dedicated to making the world safe for cultural differences. Our scholarship helps advance understanding by taking the long and comparative view of human behavior. From our perspective, this executive order serves no useful purpose and dramatically reverses decades of precedent without any apparent careful consideration for the violation of human rights of refugees and immigrants and of the prospect for potentially dangerous consequences. This executive order places scholars, students and practitioners in anthropology and other disciplines in serious jeopardy.

“We will continue to muster anthropological knowledge and expertise in the service of upholding human rights, protecting academic freedom and helping solve—not exacerbate—human problems,” Waterston added. “To our friends and colleagues around the world, we feel compelled to emphasize this new administration’s actions do not reflect the views of a majority or even a plurality of the American people. This government cannot hide behind the spectacle and highly charged xenophobic rhetoric of nationalism any longer. Its policies and practices must be based on knowledge gained from systematic observation. To do otherwise places human rights and the rule of law in peril. We are watching closely, and hold this new administration accountable for remaining within the guide rails of truth and justice.”
American Ethnological Society – January 31, 2017

American Ethnological Society Statement on President Trump’s Immigration Executive Order

Founded in 1842, the American Ethnological Society (AES) is the oldest professional society for anthropologists in the United States. Our members include some of the foremost anthropological experts in the world on Islamic culture, global migration, refugee policy, and violent radicalization. AES does not usually issue statements about policy matters, but we are doing so now because we are profoundly disturbed by President Donald Trump’s Executive order to bar all refugees from entering the United States for 120 days, to bar Syrian refugees indefinitely, and to bar citizens of Syria, Yemen, Libya, Iran, Iraq, Sudan and Somalia from entering the U.S. for at least 90 days.

We endorse the American Anthropological Association’s statement on this ill-considered new policy. In addition, we make the following points:

Far from making the U.S. safer from terrorism, the new policy is grounded in crude characterizations of entire nations and prejudiced stereotypes of Muslims, and it plays into the hands of Islamic extremists who seek to foment anti-American sentiment. It is also likely to embolden violent extremists in the U.S. and to lead to an increase in hate crimes.

The Executive order targets citizens of countries that have had no involvement in lethal terrorist attacks carried out on U.S. soil in recent years.

The Executive order targets refugees, particularly refugees from Syria, to whom the United States, together with other nations, has a humanitarian obligation, enshrined in the 1967 Protocol to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (of which the U.S. is a State Party) and in international customary law.

The Executive order violates the constitution as well as U.S. immigration law by selecting groups for prejudicial treatment based on their religion and nationality.

Following the Executive order, cases have come to light of anthropologists and other academics unable to travel to conferences or to return to their universities in the U.S. after foreign travel, and of students unable to complete their courses of study in the United States. This damages individuals, universities, and the culture of international commerce, conversation and cooperation that represent the best hope for a peaceful future. By restricting our colleagues’ and students’ research and training and by creating unnecessary enmity abroad, it also damages prospects for evidence-based policymaking rooted in first-hand, in-depth understanding of the rest of the world.
Statement on U.S. Executive Order on Immigration

We, the undersigned, represent learned societies whose members include archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, linguists, and cultural heritage specialists, as well as public members whose professional expertise lies in other domains. On behalf of these societies and our members, we write to voice our opposition to the US Executive Order, “Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States,” issued on January 27, 2017. This Executive Order, among other things, suspends the entry of immigrant and nonimmigrant citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen into the United States for at least ninety days. The Executive Order also indicates that additional countries may be recommended for similar treatment.

Many of our organizations count among their members individuals who come from countries affected by, or potentially affected by, this Executive Order. Our members across the globe, moreover, have innumerable friends and colleagues in these countries. Our societies want only the warmest and most heartfelt hospitality to be extended to these friends and colleagues when they come to the United States, just as our organizations’ US members, and members elsewhere, have been extended warm and heartfelt hospitality in their time in the countries in question.

We are thus profoundly concerned by policies that might undermine our friendships and collegial relationships. Indeed, and to the contrary, we emphatically and unreservedly affirm that among our core values is the conviction that personal and cultural engagement and exchanges among all of our organizations’ members and affiliates — including members, colleagues, and friends in the United States and members, colleagues, and friends in the countries affected by the Executive Order — are of inestimable benefit in promoting peaceful relations in our often troubled world.

Moreover, we affirm our unwavering conviction that the worldwide community of archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, linguists, and cultural heritage specialists who work together in countries such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen are among those global ambassadors best able to promote understanding, mutual respect, and relationships of true well-being among our many nations.

In short, we assert that security and safety for all concerned can flow from the alliances and goodwill that our members and affiliates have cultivated in our many years of working together as friends and colleagues throughout the world. We seek policies that, instead of setting the United States at odds with whole citizenries in the Middle East and Africa, will foster among these nations the partnerships and collaborations that we hold so dear, and we thus add our voices to the many others urging the US government to articulate policies consistent with these values.

The American Schools of Oriental Research
Society for American Archaeology
January 30, 2017
Dear ASOR colleagues,

Several of you have been in touch to comment on policies initiated by the new United States administration, especially (1) the Executive Order issued on January 27, 2017, that restricts entry of citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen into the United States and (2) the proposal to eliminate the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, as part of cuts to the US federal budget. I write both to thank you for writing and, more important, to share with you ASOR’s response.

First, regarding the Executive Order, “Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States” (link): this Executive Order, among other things, suspends the entry of immigrant and nonimmigrant citizens of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen into the United States for the next ninety days, until reviews are conducted to determine whether the countries in question provide information needed to certify that anyone seeking entry to the US is “who the individual claims to be and is not a security or public-safety threat.” After ninety days, it will be decided which countries adequately meet these requirements, and citizens of countries judged not to be in compliance would be barred from entering the United States until it is deemed that “compliance occurs.” Additional countries may be "recommended for similar treatment."

ASOR counts among its members colleagues who come from many of the countries affected by this Executive Order. ASOR members across the globe, moreover, have innumerable friends and colleagues in these countries other than those who are ASOR members. ASOR’s members in the United States want only to extend to these friends and colleagues the warmest and most heartfelt hospitality when they come to the US, just as ASOR’s US members, and members elsewhere, have been extended warm and heartfelt hospitality in their time in the countries in question.

ASOR is thus profoundly concerned by policies that might undermine our friendships and collegial relationships. Indeed, and to the contrary, ASOR emphatically and unreservedly affirms that among our core values is the conviction that personal and cultural engagement and exchange among all of ASOR's members and affiliates — including ASOR members, colleagues, and friends in the United States and ASOR members, colleagues, and friends in the countries affected by the Executive Order — are of inestimable benefit in promoting peaceful relations in our often troubled world.

Moreover, ASOR affirms its unwavering conviction that ASOR’s worldwide community of archaeologists, historians, and cultural heritage professionals who work together in countries such as Iran, Iraq, Libya, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, and throughout the Near East and wider
Mediterranean, are among those global ambassadors best able to promote understanding, mutual respect, and relationships of true well-being among our many nations.

ASOR, in short, asserts that security and safety for all concerned can flow from the alliances and goodwill that our members and affiliates have cultivated in our many years of working together as friends and colleagues in the Near East and wider Mediterranean. We seek policies that, instead of setting the United States at odds with whole citizenries in the Middle East, will foster among these nations the partnerships and collaborations that we at ASOR hold so dear, and we hope that going forward, our United States members will urge the US government to articulate policies consistent with these values.

ASOR as an organization, along with many, many ASOR members, has also benefitted from support extended by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The NEH has been committed to fostering our work of scholarly and personal engagement in the Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds as part of its larger mission of supporting research, education, preservation, and public programs in the humanities and in those social sciences that use humanistic methods. The NEA has sustained ASOR members in their work by supporting museum exhibitions, care of collections, conservation, community engagement, and education activities.

Like many of our sister learned societies, therefore, we urge ASOR members who are United States citizens to speak out in support of the NEH and NEA, through the avenues provided by the National Humanities Alliance (of which ASOR is a proud member), at (NHA link), and PEN America link.

Again, I (and ASOR) thank you all for being in touch to voice your concerns, and I do hope you will be in touch with any other thoughts you might have.

In the meantime, and as always, all best,

Susan Ackerman
President, American Schools of Oriental Research
Preston H. Kelsey Professor of Religion, Dartmouth College
E-mail: asorpres@bu.edu
AIA Supports ASOR Statement

The Archaeological Institute of America would like to state its strongest support for the statement made by the American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) in response to and expressing concerns about US Executive Order, “Protecting the Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States,” issued on January 27, 2017.
National Humanities Alliance – January 19, 2017

Help Us Nip Efforts to Defund NEH in the Bud

News broke this morning that the incoming Trump Administration has a budget blueprint that proposes the elimination of NEH, along with other cultural agencies, and a major downsizing of others.

This news has elicited great concern from the humanities community, and it is undoubtedly time to rally support for the National Endowment for the Humanities.

That said, this blueprint is not an official proposal. The Trump Administration will be shaping its budget request over the coming months with broad input and we look forward to an opportunity to demonstrate the value of federal funding for NEH.

We are also heartened by Republican support in Congress, which has been strong over the past few years. Indeed, Republican-controlled appropriations committees have supported increases for both NEA and NEH for the past two fiscal years. More broadly, many Republicans have opposed far more minor cuts to the agency.

Consistently, Members of Congress have been compelled by advocacy that points out that:

- Through a rigorous peer-review process, NEH funds cutting-edge research, museum exhibits that reach all parts of the country, and cultural preservation of local heritage that would otherwise be lost.

- NEH’s Standing Together initiative funds reading groups for veterans that help them process their experiences through discussions on the literature of war; writing programs for veterans suffering from PTSD; and training for Veterans Affairs staff to help them better serve veterans.

- NEH grants catalyze private investment. Small organizations leverage NEH grants to attract additional private, local support. NEH’s Challenge Grant program has leveraged federal funds at a 3:1 ratio to enable organizations to raise more than $3 billion in private support. State Humanities Councils, meanwhile, leverage $5 for every dollar of federal investment. Grants through the Public Programs division have leveraged more than $16 billion in non-federal support, an 8:1 ratio.

We ask you now to send a message to your Members of Congress and the President to make clear that you, as a constituent, value the humanities.
In view of recent developments regarding the visa policy of the United States, the board of directors of the Paleopathology Association have released the following policy statement:

The Paleopathology Association is an international organisation that aims to improve our understanding of disease and health throughout human history. This gives a global perspective as to how disease has shaped the development of all cultures across the planet. We greatly value the contributions of our members throughout the world, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity or religious background.

We foster the principal that all who undertake research in this field can meet in an inclusive atmosphere of scientific excellence and education at any of our conferences, whether held in North America or elsewhere.

Sincerely,
PPA Board of Directors
Association for Political and Legal Anthropology

Link

Speaking Justice to Power: APLA / PoLAR Respond to the Trump Executive Order on Immigration

In response to the Trump administration’s Executive Order, PoLAR and APLA commissioned Speaking Justice to Power: APLA/PoLAR Respond to the Trump Executive Order on Immigration, a series from scholars working on the politics and law of borders and migration. The first installment presents:

- "Bringing Back Justice, Editorial Introduction" by Heath Cabot
- "On Trump's Executive Order" by Nicole Constable
- "Doing Bad by Stealth?" by Anthony Good
- "Cruel, But Not Unusual" by Tobias Kelly
- "The Narcissist and the Nationalist" by John Torpey
Our department is honored to have several Fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The AAAS has recently joined the AAA, the SAA and 170 other leading scientific organizations to sign a letter urging President Trump to rescind his Executive Order on visas and immigration, arguing that it will have a profoundly negative impact on the ability of scholars to conduct their work, which depends on openness, transparency and the free flow of ideas and people.

Letter

AAAS News Feed
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The American Association of Physical Anthropologists will be supporting the March for Science during their annual meetings in April.

AAPA News Feed