

January 30, 2017

Dear Fellow members of the International Studies Association:

We are writing about the reaction of the ISA to the Executive Order signed by President Trump on January 27 putting a 90-day ban on immigration into the United States from Iraq, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen, as well as barring Syrian refugees and at least temporarily barring other refugees from selected Middle Eastern countries. The 90-day ban will bar any member of ISA from any of these seven countries from attending the 2017 ISA Convention and therefore imposes a significant burden on our Association.

It is clear from Section II of the ISA Constitution that this ban will hinder the ability of our Association to achieve its purposes:

1. The Purpose of the Association is to serve the needs and enhance the capacities of scholars, practitioners, and others without regard to nationality having a professional interest in expanding, disseminating, and applying knowledge of interrelations among nations and peoples.
2. To achieve these ends, the Association shall actively pursue cooperative relationships with other appropriate organizations around the world.
3. The Association is educational and non-partisan. It will not support or oppose political parties or candidates. It may take positions on issues only if they are immediately and directly concerned with the purpose stated above and only within the limits that must be observed to maintain tax exemption under the revenue laws of the country in which the headquarters are located.

A communication from the current ISA President, the President-Elect, and the Past-President, along with the ISA Executive Director, on January 29 declares that ISA remains committed to diversity, inclusion, and academic freedom but fails to protest the Executive Order, even though the Order directly contravenes our principles and inhibits our practice. The communication notes that the Association is prohibited from taking stands on “partisan” political issues; but the controversy over the Executive Order is not partisan. The Order has been sharply criticized by a majority of members of the United States Senate, including a number of prominent Republicans. It is clear from the text of the ISA Constitution, quoted above, that the ISA may take positions on issues immediately and directly concerned with our core purposes, and it is obvious that the Executive Order conflicts with our core purposes. So the ban on the ISA engaging in partisan activity irrelevant to the issue at hand.

We note that a number of non-profit organizations have strongly contested the Executive Order, including Duke University, the University of Michigan, Princeton University, and many others. The Taskforce on Civil and Human Rights of the Middle Eastern Studies Association (MESA) has condemned the Executive Order. The Association of American Universities has stated “the administration’s new order barring the entry or return of individuals from certain countries is already causing damage and should end as quickly as possible.” Many other scientific and artistic organizations have also criticized and protested the Order.

We, the undersigned, call on the International Studies Association to issue a forthright statement criticizing the immigration ban in the Executive Order as in contradiction to our essential purposes as a scholarly association.

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Beth A. Simmons
Jack Levy
Kathryn Sikkink
Stephen Walt
Miles Kahler
William R. Thompson
Melissa Lee
Layna Mosley
Michael Barnett
Peter J. Katzenstein
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James A. Caporaso
Keir Lieber
Swati Parashar
Jonathan D. Kirschner
Jeffrey Frieden
Charles Kupchan
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Martha Finnemore
Robert Jervis
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Tanisha Fazal

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Joakim Kreutz
Jacqueline L. Hazelton
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Sebastian Rosato
John Ruggie
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Kenneth W. Abbott
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Elizabeth Saunders
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Jonas Tallberg
Robert English
Sarah Daly
Loch K. Johnson
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Abbey Steele
Doyle Hodges
Angela Oels
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Mark Axelrod
Miranda Schreurs
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Christopher Chase-Dunn
Robin Broad
Stefan Renckens
Kateryna M. Wowk,
Susanna Campbell
Guri Bang
Charlotte Epstein
Kathryn Hochstetler
Karim Makdisi
Arild Underdal
Peter Trubowitz
Kavi Joseph Abraham
Michael J. Tierney
Erika Forsberg
Wil Burns
Michael Manulak
Costantino Pischedda
Klaus Jacob
Ulrich Sedelmeier
Martin Bayly
Gordon Adams
Rani Mullen
Thania Sanchez
Hayley Stevenson

Jack Snyder
Julia C. Morse
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Kevin Dunn
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Carolyn Gallaher
Stefano Guzzini
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Hrach Gregorian
Jean-Frédéric Morin
Govinda Clayton
Randolph Persaud
Antje Wiener
Kirsten Selbmann-Lobbedey
Janina Dill

[Signatures not taken after 2:53 pm January 30 because so many were flowing in – one per minute between 2:00 and 3:30 pm.]