

[Know Your Neighbor: Multifaith Encounters Coalition Statement and Call to Action on Immigration Executive Orders](#)



Faith-based and humanist groups call on government to reaffirm American values

“Although the U.S. is a nation of immigrants and has a long history of welcoming refugees from diverse lands, we also have a history of different periods of xenophobia and exclusion, including the Chinese Exclusion Act, the internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, and the rejection of Jewish refugees from Nazi persecution and genocide. None of these actions made our country more secure, and we can be certain that the great majority of our people do not support a repeat of such episodes.”

—Maha Elgenaidi, Executive Director of the Islamic Networks Group

“Any attempt to ban Muslim refugees based on their religion betrays our values and sends the un-American message that there are second-class faiths. Our country, founded by immigrants who established religious freedom as a bedrock principle, is better than this. A threat to anyone’s religious liberty is a threat to everyone’s religious liberty, and we as Baptists stand with those facing religious persecution around the world, regardless of their faith.”

—Amanda Tyler, Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

San Jose – The [Know Your Neighbor: Multifaith Encounters campaign](#), a program of the [Islamic Networks Group \(ING\)](#), released the following statement today in reaction to executive orders signed by President Donald Trump restricting immigration from a number of Middle Eastern and African countries.

The executive orders issued today and earlier this week by President Donald Trump require us to reaffirm basic values that we share with the great majority of Americans:

- **Respect for diversity, pluralism, and religious freedom:** Although the executive orders do not explicitly mention Muslims or their faith, several provisions target Muslims. As such, they violate the principles embodied in the First Amendment and our country's commitment to religious neutrality.
- **Care for the stranger and the needy:** Except for the native peoples, since its founding the United States has been a nation of immigrants. Our country has a long tradition of welcoming and supporting immigrants and the needy; the rejection of refugees fleeing horrific violence flies in the face of the obligation to help and the hospitality that the American people have traditionally shown to those in need.
- **Civil liberties:** While these orders do not explicitly target particular groups, they clearly impact primarily one religion (Muslim) and one ethnicity (Latino). Singling out these groups reinforces and encourages existing prejudice and discrimination against them, including U.S. citizens and documented immigrants belonging to these groups.
- **Unity and solidarity:** Policies whose effect is to single out specific religious or ethnic groups violate the sense of national unity and solidarity that allows the diverse people of our nation to live in peace and harmony.

Although these measures purport to deal with the threat of terrorism, there is little evidence to support this claim. What they do, however, is to cast a dark cloud over the entire American Muslim population, making it all too clear that their significant contributions to American life are not welcomed. This impacts women in headscarves who have been the object of increased harassment and students in schools who have seen a rise in bullying in recent years due to anti-Muslim rhetoric which will increase with these policies. In response to the Executive Orders, we faith-based and humanist organizations call for an increase in:

- **Interfaith engagement**, including both interfaith dialogues and events bringing people of diverse traditions together for mutual encounter and learning. To get started, see [this page](#).
- **Education about Muslims and Islam**, including presentations by Muslim speakers and "meet a Muslim" events in houses of worship or other public venues. To get started, see [this page](#).
- Commitment to and training in **being "upstanders"** who respond supportively to incidents of hate and bigotry.

This is a time to come together as a community and uphold our sacred values. Therefore, in responding to the current situation, and to prepare for possible actions in the future that may likewise call our fundamental values into question, we commit ourselves, and call on all who share our concerns, **to respect the principle of nonviolence in thought, word, and deed.**

- We will maintain an attitude of charity and openness to all, including those with whom we most profoundly disagree. We will seek to understand their motivations and assume that they are sincerely seeking what is right unless presented with clear evidence to the contrary. If we are people of prayer, then we will pray for their well-being and for wisdom for them and for ourselves.
- In our statements, we will condemn actions but not persons. We will speak firmly but respectfully of and with those whose words and actions we oppose.

Signed:

ALEPH: Alliance for Jewish Renewal
 Alliance of Baptists
 Alliance for Shared Values
 American Conference on Diversity
 American Muslim Advisory Council
 Arizona Jews for Justice
 Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty
 Bay Area Interfaith Connect
 Bend the Arc Jewish Action
 Bridges of Faith Trialogue, Cincinnati
 California Institute for Human Science
 Interfaith Circle
 Center for Inquiry
 Church World Service
 Colorado Muslim Speakers Bureau
 Council of Islamic Organizations of Kentucky
 Delaware Valley Speakers Bureau
 Euphrates Institute
 First Congregational Church, United
 Church of Christ, Palo Alto, California
 Global Alliance Interfaith Networks
 Global Immersion Project
 Interfaith Alliance
 Interfaith Arkansas
 Interfaith Center at the Presidio
 Interfaith Center of New York
 Interfaith Council of Central Florida
 Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice, Ann Arbor
 InterFaith Leadership Council of Metropolitan Detroit
 Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston
 Interfaith Paths to Peace
 Interfaith Youth Core

Islamic Speakers Bureau of San Diego
 Islamic Speakers Bureau of Santa Barbara
 Jewish Community Relations Council of the San Francisco Bay Area
 Jewish Council for Public Affairs
 Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest
 Milstein Center for Interreligious Dialogue
 Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light
 Monmouth Center for World Religions and Ethical Thought
 Muslim Coalition of Connecticut
 Muslim Community Center, East Bay
 National Council of Churches
 National Sikh Campaign
 Network of Spiritual Progressives
 New Jersey Islamic Networks Group
 Pacifica Institute
 Pico Union Project
 Religions for Peace USA
 Religious Action Center for Reform Judaism
 San Francisco Interfaith Council
 Seattle Islamic Speakers Bureau
 Shoulder to Shoulder Campaign
 Silicon Valley Interreligious Council
 Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom
 South Coast Interfaith Council
 Speakers Bureau of Nebraska
 Spokane Interfaith Council
 Tikkun Magazine
 Tri City Interfaith Council
 The United Church of Christ
 United Religions Initiative
 United We Dream Houston
 Uri L'Tzedek: The Jewish Orthodox Social Justice Movement

Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati
Islamic Education & Resources Network
(ILearn)
Islamic Networks Group
Islamic Society of Greater Houston
Islamic Speakers Bureau of Alabama
Islamic Speakers Bureau of Arizona
Islamic Speakers Bureau of Dallas/Fort
Worth, Texas
Islamic Speakers Bureau of Edmonton,
Canada
Islamic Speakers Bureau of Greater
Houston
Islamic Speakers Bureau of Saint Louis

Valley Beit Midrash: The Jewish Pluralistic
Center
Washington Ethical Society
Welcoming Gainesville
Wisdom Circle Ministry

The [Know Your Neighbor: Multifaith Encounters \(KYN-ME\)](#) campaign is a program of the [Islamic Networks Group \(ING\)](#) whose mission is to increase religious literacy and build relations among Americans of all backgrounds. In pursuit of this mission, the KYN-ME campaign, which was first initiated in partnership with the White House in 2015, aims to build interreligious and intercultural understanding, empathy, and respect by promoting face-to-face encounter between people of diverse faiths and worldviews. Know Your Neighbor: Multifaith Encounters works to foster understanding and dialogue by encouraging Americans to get to “Know Your Neighbor.”

The statement above can be found at: <https://ing.org/2017/01/26/know-your-neighbor-multifaith-encounters-statement-and-call-to-action-on-immigration-executive-orders/>