

## Iranian Refugee Fears Persecution Will Intensify in Muslim-Majority Nations If US Prioritizes Christians



A Christian refugee from Iran, who is now a U.S. citizen and voted for President Donald Trump, says he's shocked by the executive order temporarily banning Iranian citizens from entering to the United States and believes Christians might face even greater persecution overseas.

The persecuted Christian, who chose to be identified only by the name Amir, told The Christian Post in a phone interview that he came to the U.S. seven years ago from Iran and is now a church planter.

Back home in Iran he faced persecution by the Islamic regime for his Christian faith and for distributing Bibles. He came to the U.S. to have freedom.

Amir said that in November he voted for Trump in the presidential election, and although he can understand some of the security concerns behind the order and the temporary ban, he was left confused as to why Iran was named among the seven Muslim-majority nations whose citizens will be banned for 90 days from coming to the U.S., should Trump's order be reinstated.

"I was quite shocked by the Iran name" appearing on the list, Amir told CP, noting that Iranian nationals have not been involved in any recent terror attacks, as opposed to others, such as Saudi Arabia, U.A.E, and Egypt, who did not make the list.

Amir said that Iran was already among the Muslim-majority nations subject to Visa Waiver Program travel restrictions under former President Barack Obama, adding that he understands the security concerns of many Americans.

"I know the U.S. is always a target of terrorism," he said, reflecting that in some ways he feels conflicted about the temporary travel ban.

"For me, I don't know what I should do. I cannot say it's a good thing, I cannot say it's a bad thing," Amir said.

He then asked why the U.S. is not putting pressure on Turkey, adding that he lived in that country for several years and witnessed how harshly refugees were treated there.

"The U.S. government needs to put more pressure on Turkey, because the Turkish government does not care about refugees over there. The refugees in Turkey ? they don't have the right to send their kids to school, they don't have the right for many things. They work on the black market for many years, they are treated like trash," Amir said.

He argued that most Iranians would have been happy if Iranian government officials and their families were prevented from getting residency in the U.S., yet Trump's order would block all ordinary Iranian citizens instead.

"They should ban Iranian government and government people, we would be so happy about that. Ninety percent of people will be so happy. Why do they allow government people's kids to come to the U.S., but normal people with hopes and dreams who want to come to a free country" are banned from doing so, he asked.

Trump's order, which also aims to temporarily suspend the U.S. refugee resettlement program for 120 days, and to indefinitely suspended Syrian refugees, was hit with a setback on Friday when U.S. District Judge James Robart in Seattle, Washington, halted the temporary measure.

A U.S. appeals court further denied on Sunday a request from the Department of Justice to restore Trump's order, while a federal appeals court is set to hear arguments over the ban on Tuesday.

Amir revealed that some families adversely affected by the order during the handful of days it was active.

One Iranian mother who applied as a refugee to come to the U.S. and apparently passed all security and background checks had received news from one of the resettlement agencies that she was approved, and was booked for a flight to America, but because of the temporary travel ban the flight was canceled.

"She's an old lady, and we don't know what she will do," Amir said. "The members of our church are so disappointed," he added.

As for comments made by Trump in a recent CBN News interview that his administration would prioritize Christians and other religious minorities seeking asylum in the U.S., language which does not appear in the executive order, Amir questioned how it can be implemented.

"OK, how do we make sure that they are real Christians, real persecuted Christians?" he asked.

What is more, Amir argued that he has seen how background checks miss out on important information about potential refugees, such as previous residencies.

"How do you make sure that there are no terrorists among the persecuted Christians" applying to come to America?" he asked.

He said that it is possible to make fake IDs and make up fake stories that get by the vetting process, admitting that "by seeing that, I'm scared."

The Iranian refugee warned that the suggested prioritization of Christians could make matters worse for persecuted Christians in Iran who are already treated poorly by the government.

Now, if the U.S. establishes a clear link between Christians and people that the U.S. gives priority to, the government of Iran could be emboldened even more to accuse Christians of being American spies, Amir argued.

"If you are giving priority to Christians, and make them sensitive about that, the pressure is going to be harder and harder for Christians inside Iran," he asserted.

"I am thinking about my brothers and sisters [in Iran.] I am a citizen of the U.S., but what about the Christians in Iran who want to leave there but now you are separating them, and they are going to be accused of being spies for America?" he questioned.

Amir also talked about his experience as a church planter and reaching Muslim refugees, and questioned whether putting a temporary ban on largely Muslim refugees isn't going to limit the potential to spread the Gospel.

"Ninety percent of my church members are newcomers," he revealed. "Every week we have new people who are just arriving to the U.S., and they are looking for a new community. Churches come in as a family, and they reach them [with the] Gospel, and they [begin] loving the community; they are loving God's Word, which they had never heard in Iran."

"I love America, my kids were born here. I am so proud of being a U.S. citizen. But at the same time, I am thinking of my own country, my own people, who are living under persecution."

Amir concluded by stating that people will have to wait and see how the order plays out, and affirmed that whatever happens, he trusts that God is watching over all.

Source:Christian Post