



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AS A REFUGEE IN THE USA



The information contained in this document is meant to educate you about your rights. It should not be in any way considered legal advice.

INTRODUCTION

We are living in difficult times. Recent actions against refugee resettlement, refugees and immigrants in the United States have created fear and concerns for many. As refugees, immigrants, lawful permanent residents (green card holders) and U.S. citizens, we all deserve to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of where we are from or how we pray. We all have rights. This resource is meant to provide refugee and immigrant communities with urgently needed information to **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS** in response to the important issues facing our communities.

What Changed?

On January 27, 2017, President Trump signed an executive order suspending refugee resettlement for four months and refugee resettlement from Syria indefinitely. It also included a ban on the entry of people from certain Muslim-majority countries - Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen - into the United States, reduced refugee admissions to 50,000 this year, and preferences for religious minorities. However, a Federal Court in the United States has said parts of his order were illegal. At this time, the 120 pause on resettlement, the travel ban on nationals from those seven countries and the stopping of Syrian refugee resettlement have all been suspended. This situation may change at any time because the case will now go to the highest court in the US - The Supreme Court. President Trump also signed executive orders to increase immigration enforcement and deport people who are undocumented. These executive orders follow the anti-refugee, anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim rhetoric we experienced during the election cycle.



What happens to me now as a refugee given the executive orders?

- If you are already a refugee in the United States, this order will have no effect on your legal status. You still have the same legal status. You can still apply for a green card after one year of residence and apply for U.S. citizenship after five years of residence.
- However, If you are a refugee or from one of the seven countries banned in the original executive order, we recommend you do not travel outside of the country until a final decision is made in the Supreme Court. You should consult with an immigration lawyer. For more information on the impact of the executive order on refugees, see therefugeecenter.org/how-will-president-trumps-executive-order-affect-refugees/.

Should I be worried at all?

This executive order has impacted many people who are waiting to be reunited with a family member who is overseas. While it does not directly impact refugees who are already in the United States, it is important that all refugees and immigrants continue to follow the laws of the United States. You do not need to be worried about your legal status as a refugee.

YOUR RIGHTS AT HOME

What If federal agents come to my home to talk to me?

There have been reports of agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and/or the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) visiting refugees' homes to talk to them. Here is what you can do if someone tries to enter your home:

- **DO NOT OPEN THE DOOR:** Immigration enforcement or the FBI can't come into your home without a warrant. They can only come in if you or someone else lets them come in.
- **REMAIN SILENT:** Anything you say can be used against you in court. In America, you have the right to be silent and not say anything to the police. You can tell the agents, "I plead the 5th amendment" and do not speak.
- **CALL A LAWYER:** You can find a pro-bono lawyer on [this website](#). Or you can call your [local ACLU](#).
- **DO NOT SIGN ANYTHING:** Don't sign anything without talking to an attorney.
- **STAND STRONG:** Get a trustworthy attorney and engage your community to advocate with you. If you are detained, you may be able to get bail and be released. Don't give up hope.
- Non-U.S. citizens, including lawful permanent residents, refugees and asylees, generally have the same rights as citizens.



REMEMBER!!!

You have the right to choose not to answer any questions. Call a lawyer immediately, and write down or take pictures of the names and badge numbers of the officers.

What is a warrant?

A piece of paper signed by a judge allowing law enforcement officers to enter a home to do a search. This also allows them to ask you questions and possibly interview you.

YOUR RIGHT TO TRAVEL

Can I still travel outside of the U.S. with a refugee status or as a green card holder?

Currently, the ban on refugee resettlement and the visa ban has been temporarily suspended by the US courts. However, we still recommend individuals from the seven countries (Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Yemen and Libya) do not travel at this time, unless it is extremely urgent or an emergency, because the situation may change again very soon. There is a high risk of travelling outside of the United States for individuals who do not have U.S. citizenship.

- If you or your loved ones are outside the U.S. and are planning to return, you should contact an attorney here in the U.S. before embarking on your journey. The person traveling should make sure to have all their documents, such as a passport, green card, or refugee travel document.
- Refugees who DO NOT have a green card or U.S. citizenship **SHOULD NOT travel outside of the U.S.** at this time for any reason, even if you are not from the seven banned countries.
- Law enforcement officers at the airport and at port of entries generally have the authority to conduct a “routine search” of all luggage and to ask you questions about your citizenship and travel itinerary [without a warrant](#).
- If you are selected for a secondary interview at the airport, you have the right to ask for a lawyer. Many lawyers are making themselves available free of charge for this purpose.
- If you or someone you know is detained, you should contact: airport@refugeerights.org, call your [local ACLU](#), and report about your experience using [this form](#).



YOUR RIGHT TO BE SAFE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

What if I am a victim of harassment in my home or neighborhood?

Your refugee status grants you legal status in the U.S., and you have the right to receive the same treatment as U.S. citizens. Your local police are there to serve you as a member of the community and protect you when you need it.

- If you are the victim of a crime, you should immediately call the police: 911.
- If you feel that you are in danger, or if someone is making threats against you or your family, DO NOT confront them. You should immediately call the police by dialing 911.
- If you are worried about your safety, talk to someone at your refugee resettlement agency or to a lawyer.
- If you believe you or someone you know has been a victim of a crime or discriminated against because of religion, nationality, or group membership, you should report it at: <https://www.splcenter.org/reporthat>



LAWFUL PERMANENT RESIDENTS WITH CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS

- [Minor offenses can result in deportation for non-US citizens](#) .
- If you are not yet a citizen and you are arrested or accused of a crime, make sure your lawyer understands your immigration status. Pleading guilty as part of a plea bargain can jeopardize your legal status and could eventually lead to deportation.
- If you have a criminal conviction on your record, it is recommended that you reach out to your lawyer to understand all your options.
- If you are able to get a “set aside” or “expunge” your conviction, this could clear your record, but the laws are different in each state, so it is best to consult a lawyer about these questions.

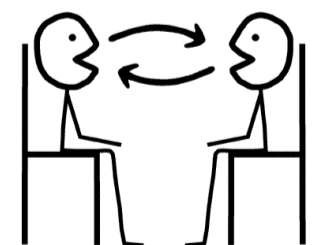


YOUR RIGHTS IF YOU ARE INTERVIEWED BY A FEDERAL AGENT

Agents from the FBI or DHS may seek to talk with you. You have the right to decline to be interviewed, but this can be viewed with suspicion. Talk to your lawyer or representative from your resettlement agency first about the interview request. If you agree to an interview:

- You have the right to have an attorney present. Find legal services at <https://cliniclegal.org/directory> or <http://www.aialawyer.org/>.
- You can choose the time and place for the interview.
- You can request to know what the questions will be at the interview and have an interpreter present.
- You do not have to answer all the questions you are asked, if you are not comfortable.
- If you are waiting for your family to be resettled to the U.S., it may take longer but they will still have the same opportunity to apply for resettlement.

interview



REMEMBER:

You **MUST NOT** give false information during your interview. It will be considered a criminal offense and may have negative consequence on you.

BE AWARE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT SURVEILLANCE

Sting Operations

A typical sting will have a law enforcement officer or cooperative member of the public play a deceptive role as criminal partner or potential victim and go along with a suspect's actions to gather evidence of the suspect's wrongdoing.

Entrapment is a practice whereby a law enforcement agent induces a person to commit a criminal offense that the person would have otherwise been unlikely to commit. Since undercover agents sometimes may monitor Muslim or immigrant communities, it is important to always maintain awareness and consciousness, hold true to your values, and not be lured into activities that could be illegal. See a recent [NY Times article on Sting Operations](#).

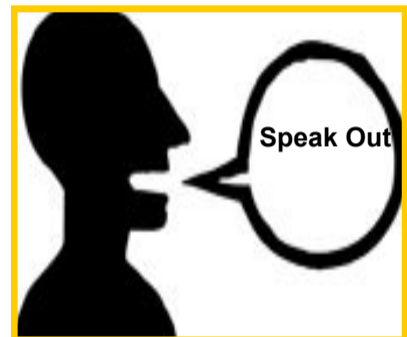
Monitor Internet Activities

Be careful not to visit websites that might hold extremist ideologies or engage in online conversations with others who might hold radical views. There can often be a generation gap between how parents are accustomed to using the Internet and how children or youth choose to use social media. Talk to your children and teenagers about what are appropriate internet sites to visit and what you expect them to avoid. Monitor your children and teenagers' activity online and encourage them not to visit websites or participate in online activity that could be perceived as problematic. Consider setting guidelines ahead of time or even using software that can restrict their use (see resources [here](#)). There are apps you can use such as [Teensafe](#) that can help parents track their children's cell phone activities.



YOUR RIGHTS TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY

The executive order on refugee resettlement impacts many refugee families. As a refugee, you are a very important advocate for your community. Your voice can have a great impact because you are a refugee. You have the right to :



- [Call and meet](#) with elected officials in your town, state, and in Congress to develop a relationship, educate them about your contribution to the community, and seek their support for refugee resettlement and issues you care about.
- Share your story as a refugee to help transform the public narrative about refugees.
- Join diverse voices such as resettlement staff, faith leaders, employers, military veterans, other refugee leaders, and supportive community members to take action together.

REMEMBER: Your Voice Matters.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & RESOURCES

There are many organizations that offer helpful information and resources about your rights and ways to keep yourself, your family, and your community safe. Unfortunately, there are also rumors and false information circulating on social media and online communities, as well as scams that seek to take advantage of refugees and other immigrants. Please make sure that you seek information from credible sources, especially when searching for information online. Some good online resources include:

The Refugee Center Online: https://therefugeecenter.org/resources/rights_laws/

The International Refugee Assistance Project: <https://refugeerights.org/>

Immigrant Defense Project: dontgeticed.org/

Informed Immigrant: www.informedimmigrant.com/resources/

American Civil Liberties Union: www.aclu.org/know-your-rights

Council on American-Islamic Relations: www.cair.com/know-your-rights.html

NILC: www.nilc.org/issues/immigration-enforcement/everyone-has-certain-basic-rights/

Customs & Border Protection: help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/66/kw/executive%20order

Refugee Resettlement Offices by State: <http://bit.ly/resettlementoffices>

Map of Immigration Legal Service Providers: <https://cliniclegal.org/directory>