

Department of English
University of Toronto at Scarborough
Statement in Response to U.S. Executive Order on Immigration
Feb 9, 2017

This statement is motivated by the recent executive order on immigration issued by the United States government, which bans Syrian refugees from entering the United States, suspends refugee admissions for 120 days, and blocks the rights of citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries, refugees or otherwise, to enter the United States. A court order overturning this ruling has been unanimously upheld, but the possibility of the continued enforcement of the order and the racist ideology that motivates it remain a threat to human rights.

In keeping with other departments and faculties at the University of Toronto, the Department of English at UTSC condemns this executive order, which contravenes fundamental human rights, flouts international law--especially the United Nations Refugee Convention--and attempts to instil fear and hatred toward vulnerable individuals who deserve recognition, support, and protection.

Along these same lines, we urge Trudeau's Federal Government to repeal the Safe Third Party Agreement with the U.S., which is endangering the lives of refugees seeking asylum in Canada. The Agreement is an acknowledgement that the United States has a fair asylum policy, which is clearly no longer the case. To try to circumvent the Agreement, refugees are risking their lives crossing the 49th parallel in rural locations, in dangerous winter conditions, to avoid being turned back at major ports of entry.

We have drafted this public statement because members of our community--staff, students, and faculty--are directly or indirectly affected by the executive order. Moreover, as humanities scholars, the ban runs counter to our deepest professional values, principles, and our commitment to higher education. Our training repeatedly confirms that the imagination,

culture, and aesthetic objects are entities that migrate freely. As award-winning Canadian author, Madeleine Thien states, in times “of chaos . . . stories [are] a refuge, a passport, everywhere.” We likewise embrace rather than fear the diversity and discomfort that attends cultural exchange.

In light of the unjust and racist executive order, we urge other faculties, universities, and professional associations to join us in condemning this ban. In accordance with other faculties we likewise urge associations holding conferences or meetings scheduled in the United States to move locations, or at the very least, create alternative participatory opportunities for those who cannot, or do not want to, travel to the United States under the current circumstances.

With respect to students travelling to the U.S., please heed the following University statement: “Students travelling abroad with concerns should call the Safety Abroad Office directly 416-946-3929; in the case of an emergency, reach us at the 24-hour collect emergency line via Campus Police at 416-978-2222. International students on all three U of T campuses who have concerns or questions can reach staff at the Centre for International Experience at 416-978-2564 or email cie.information@utoronto.ca.” Faculty and staff are also encouraged to notify the University of their international travel plans and pursue caution when travelling to, or through, the United States.

In closing, we want to reiterate that as members of the Department of English at UTSC and of the larger University of Toronto community, we affirm the principles of freedom of expression and communication, and of aid and comfort to those in need. In upholding these principles, we will contribute to collective and individual efforts to resist and condemn this executive order.

Further resources and statements of resistance and support:

[Statement from Universities Canada](#)

[Statement from the Association of American Universities](#)

The Varsity. [“U of T Students Among Those Impacted by US Travel Ban”](#)
[Message from Faculty of Law Dean Ed Iacobucci on recent events in the](#)
[United States and Quebec](#)
[Statement from the Political Science Department](#)
[Statement from the Federation of the Humanities and Social Sciences](#)
[Statement from the Canadian Association of Professional Academic](#)
[Librarians](#)