

Maine Synagogues Condemn Refugee Ban

Synagogues across the State of Maine condemn President Trump's executive order suspending entry by refugees into the United States and barring all entry to individuals from several majority-Muslim countries. Faced with the largest refugee crisis in all of human history, the United States must continue to be a safe haven for people fleeing religious persecution, genocide, and terror.

Our Jewish tradition teaches that every individual was created in the image of God. We must not turn our backs to the suffering of those individuals who have fled horrific violence, and who continue to be in extreme peril.

Furthermore, Jewish history bears witness to the critical choice facing our country: whether to rescue those in need or to construct barriers to keep them out. Jews have seen America at its best, and we know what it looks like for our country to provide the chance at a new beginning. In generations past, our families were given opportunities to gain education, join the workforce, and become part of building our great nation.

But we also know what it looks like for America to turn its back on refugees. We have seen xenophobia overwhelm our nation's capacity for compassion, and we have seen the doors slam shut in our greatest hours of need. Severe restrictions kept countless Jewish immigrants in danger, and too many people faced death in Nazi Europe after being turned away from these shores.

We appeal to President Trump to revoke his executive order, and, failing that, we urge Maine's Senators and Representatives to rescind that order through legislative action. Our country's refugee program should serve refugees of all religions, ethnicities, and citizenships, and it should be strengthened — not halted, paused, or restricted.

As Jews, we take seriously the biblical mandate to "welcome the stranger." Grounded in our history and values, we will continue to raise our voices in support of refugees and call on our great nation to uphold a legacy of welcome.

Adas Yeshurun Synagogue, Rockland
Beth Israel Congregation, Bath
Congregation Bet Ha'am, South Portland
Congregation Beth Israel, Bangor
Congregation Etz Chaim, Biddeford
Congregation Shaarey Tphiloh, Portland
Temple Beth El, Augusta
Temple Beth El, Portland