

# Trump's Executive Order on Immigration: What We Know and What We Don't

By LIAM STACK JAN. 29, 2017



Demonstrators gathered outside Kennedy Airport in New York on Saturday to protest the treatment of refugees and others from the seven countries named in President Trump's executive order. Credit Christopher Lee for The New York Times

President Trump's executive order on immigration set off a widening political and legal crisis one week into his presidency.

The order indefinitely barred Syrian refugees from entering the United States, suspended all refugee admissions for 120 days and blocked citizens of seven Muslim-majority countries, refugees or otherwise, from entering the United States for 90 days: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

The immigration ban unleashed chaos on the immigration system and in airports in the United States and overseas, and prompted protests and legal action. It was condemned on Monday by former President Barack Obama, at least 100 American diplomats and the acting attorney general, Sally Q. Yates, whom Mr. Trump quickly fired on Monday night.

Here is a quick guide to what we know and what we don't know about the order.

## What we know

The executive order was signed at 4:42 p.m. Eastern on Friday. The full text [can be found here](#). It does not affect naturalized United States citizens from the seven named countries.

After the order was signed, students, visitors and green-card-holding legal permanent United States residents from the seven countries — and refugees from around the world — were [stopped at airports in the United States and abroad](#), including Cairo, Dubai and Istanbul. Some were blocked from entering the United States and were sent back overseas.

The order quickly prompted large protests across the country. On Saturday night, a federal judge in Brooklyn [blocked part](#) of Mr. Trump's order, saying that travelers being held at airports across the United States should not be sent back to their home countries. Federal judges in three states — Massachusetts, Virginia and Washington — soon [issued similar rulings](#).

On Sunday morning, the Department of Homeland Security said it would comply with the rulings while it continued to enforce the president's executive orders. Reince Priebus, the White House chief of staff, said on Sunday that green-card holders from the seven targeted countries [would not be prevented from returning to the United States](#).

Demonstrations against the ban continued on Sunday and Monday, and at least 100 diplomats at the State Department [signed a dissent memo](#) expressing opposition.

Opponents of the ban got a boost on Monday from Mr. Obama, who [criticized the executive order](#) and endorsed the protests against it, and Ms. Yates, who ordered the Justice Department [not to defend the executive order in court](#). She said she did not believe the order to be lawful.

Mr. Trump fired Ms. Yates just hours after she defied him, saying she had “betrayed” his administration and was “weak on borders and very weak on illegal immigration.”

Mr. Trump replaced Ms. Yates with Dana J. Boente, United States attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia. He will now serve as acting attorney general.

Mr. Trump's inner circle had left much of the administration in the dark about the executive order. It was created with [little to no legal review or input](#) from the departments most involved in carrying it out, in particular Homeland Security. It was written by a small White House team overseen by Stephen K. Bannon, the chief White House strategist and former Breitbart News executive.

The order was [widely condemned](#) by Democrats, religious groups, business leaders, immigration policy experts, academics and others, but was praised by some Republican leaders, including the House speaker, Paul D. Ryan, and [supporters of Mr. Trump](#).

The United Nations high commissioner for refugees [estimated that 20,000 refugees](#) from all over the world would be affected immediately by the ban. The United Nations human rights chief said on Monday that the ban violated international human rights law.

### **What we don't know**

The abrupt firing of Ms. Yates left the Trump administration without a Senate-confirmed leader at the Department of Justice.

It was not clear how long the new acting attorney general, Mr. Boente, would remain in that position or what approach he would take toward the immigration ban, which is the subject of several lawsuits.

The president has nominated Senator Jeff Sessions, an Alabama Republican, to be attorney general. The Senate Judiciary Committee is expected to vote on his nomination on Tuesday.

It was unclear how consistently airport officials across the country were complying with the court rulings that partly blocked Mr. Trump's executive order. Mr. Priebus's statements on Sunday morning did little to clarify how the executive order would be interpreted and carried out in the weeks ahead.

He said border agents had "discretionary authority" to subject travelers, including American citizens, to additional scrutiny if they had been to any of the seven countries mentioned in the executive order, but it was not clear what that would look like in practice.

[https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/29/us/trump-refugee-ban-muslim-executive-order.html?\\_r=1](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/29/us/trump-refugee-ban-muslim-executive-order.html?_r=1)