

Local immigrant-sponsorship group fears Trump's next move

By: Kevin Rollason

Posted: **01/29/2017 5:55 PM**



Phil Hossack / Winnipeg Free Press Files

Abdikheir Ahmed, co-director of Immigration Partnership Winnipeg, believes refugees in the U.S. won't receive a fair process because of Donald Trump's policies.

Manitoba resident Abdikheir Ahmed, who came to Canada from Somalia as a refugee more than a decade ago, is critical about the U.S. travel ban issued against people from seven predominantly-Muslim countries.

"Mr. Trump and his administration do not know how to run a government," Ahmed said on Sunday.

"They toss things out without knowing the consequences. These guys seem to not understand how to run a government. They seem to think it is like running Trump's business."

U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Saturday, imposing a three-month travel ban to the United States involving people from Iran, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and Libya.

That kicked off attempts by the Canadian government, which hadn't been given advance notice about the American move, to spend much of the weekend trying to find out if that also affected citizens of those seven countries who also hold a valid Canadian permanent resident card.

While U.S. officials haven't commented publicly since, they have talked to their Canadian counterparts, and on Sunday afternoon Canadian immigration minister Ahmed Hussen said people with a valid Canadian permanent resident card and a passport from one of the seven countries can travel to the United States. As well, dual citizens with a Canadian passport can also cross the border.

But Ahmed, the co-director of the federally-funded Immigration Partnership Winnipeg, said he not only is critical about what Trump has done so far, he also fears what might come next from the White House.

"I'm sure they have more that are coming and they would have gone farther if it did not affect the economy of the United States," he said.

"These seven countries are the poorest."

Ahmed said that beyond Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's tweet on the weekend saying Canada continues to welcome refugees, he would like to see the country accept all the refugees that have already been vetted by American officials for acceptance, but who are now subject to the travel ban.

"We need to follow our words with action," he said.

"Everyone turned back should be allowed to come to Canada."

And Ahmed believes Canada should pull out of the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement, which requires refugees to apply for refugee protection in the first country they arrive in.

"The United States is not a safe country anymore. No refugee in the United States will receive a fair process," he said.

Meanwhile, the local Mennonite Central Committee will be meeting on Monday about the executive orders issued by Trump against refugees, but for now they pointed to a statement made by J. Ron Byler, MCC U.S.'s executive director, last Thursday following the immigration enforcement taken on Wednesday and what had been expected in the days ahead.

"These actions portray immigrants and refugees as criminals and threats rather than seeing them as God's beloved children," Byler's statement said.

"By building walls and turning away refugees we ignore Christ's call to care for those in need and to love the stranger among us as we love ourselves... as Anabaptist Christians, we have long held that governments must protect the religious freedom of all people, not just Christians. We strongly oppose any discrimination against refugees, including discrimination based on religion or nationality.

"Our nation must keep its doors open to all people who are in need and face persecution."

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Read more by Kevin Rollason.