

## MACHAR STATEMENT ON THE EXECUTIVE ORDER LIMITING IMMIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Approved by the Machar Board on January 30, 2017

Machar, the Washington Congregation for Secular Humanistic Judaism, strongly opposes the recent Executive Order by the President of the United States banning entry into this country by citizens of seven nations in the Middle East and imposing a limit on the number of refugees accepted into the United States annually.

This Executive Order places a transparent veil over what is effectively religious discrimination against Muslims. The Order prevents persons from these seven countries from entering the United States, but makes exceptions for religious minorities – thus, Christians or Jews in the target countries (which are majority Muslim) may be exempted from the U.S. entry ban. However, Muslims are not exempted from the entry ban, even if they are a target of war or violence in their home country and pose no identifiable risk to the U.S.

Combined with Mr. Trump's stated intention during the recent presidential campaign to ban Muslims, this pattern seems to us clearly to constitute religious discrimination against Muslims, regardless of the obvious and transparent effort to disguise that result. This we believe violates the United States Constitution, and is deeply inconsistent with the values that underlie the Judaism.

The U.S. has, for many years, instituted effective mechanisms for determining the identity and peaceful intention of refugees seeking entry into the U.S. These mechanisms have worked well in preventing terrorism committed in the United States by non-U.S. persons for a considerable period of time. Thus, the Executive Order sweeps far too widely, excluding large numbers of innocent persons suffering great hardship and seeking refuge, while doing little to enhance the safety of the United States.

Many of the refugees from the countries addressed in the Executive Order have faced severe conditions of war, violence, and deprivation. As Jews, we are all too conscious of the need to provide refuge to persons fleeing war, terrorism, and deprivation. During World War II, the United States chose to exclude thousands of European Jews fleeing from the violence of Nazi Germany. Because of this exclusion, many thousands of Jews died in Europe who otherwise might have escaped. We are determined that we, and the United States, should never again be party to such needless cruelty.

Furthermore, secular and humanistic Jews, like all Jews, have benefitted greatly from the religious freedom of the United States. We Jews have all entrusted our personal safety to the terms of the United States Constitution that promise evenhandedness in treatment to persons of all religious faiths or of no religious faith. For many centuries Jews faced religious persecution in Europe and other countries around the world. The United States at its origin committed itself to religious liberty for all, banning all laws that "prohibit[ ] the free exercise" of any religion. We as Jews cannot believe that the United States will abandon this commitment, whether openly or under a veil of deception and evasion.

Thus, we believe the Executive Order issued by President Trump is inconsistent both with the longstanding values of the country we hold dear, and with the ethical values that we as secular

and humanistic Jews view as fundamental to our identity. For that reason, we call upon President Trump to rescind this discriminatory Order, and to work instead to find more appropriate means to improve the security of the United States. We call upon Members of Congress to oppose Administration efforts to implement this Order. And we call upon Jews and secular humanists throughout the U.S. to voice their support for all refugees and immigrants who, whatever their religious backgrounds or beliefs, intend no injury to the United States.