

February 1, 2017

SAH Statement on the Recent US Immigration Ban

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) strongly opposes the Executive Order signed by President Donald J. Trump on 27 January 2017 that limits the admission of non-citizens to the United States from seven predominantly Muslim countries. SAH is a US-based organization that is international in its membership and the scope of its inquiry. As a consequence of its global perspective, SAH stands in solidarity with colleagues in the US and around the world who are affected by the executive order.

SAH's mission is to foster scholarship on the history of the built environment worldwide that is sustained by our core academic values: rigorous, wide-ranging inquiry, evidence-based argumentation, and the peer review process. SAH is committed to inclusivity, ethical standards, fairness, diversity, and mutual respect. The Executive Order violates these principles. In attempting to limit the movement of people, the order attempts to limit the exchange of ideas, which is essential to intellectual inquiry in all fields and to the sustenance of democracy.

Academics, students, and professionals who investigate the built environment depend upon the freedom of travel to study, research, teach and pursue their work. The current order will impede the work of all whose research is within the seven affected countries and will limit scholarly discourse by prohibiting entire populations from full participation in academic study, teaching, conferences and symposia.

As historians and conservators of the built world, we appreciate the global challenge to preserve and maintain contemporary cities and ancient sites in the Middle East and elsewhere in the face of war and terrorist acts. As American citizens, we cherish the historic human rights achievements of the United States but, as historians, we also recognize our leaders' past unconscionable decisions, such as denying refugee status to Jews trying to flee Nazi Germany and the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War. As humanitarians we mourn the loss of life and liberty first and foremost; as conservators of the built environment, we also mourn the destruction of modern and ancient sites across the Middle East due to war and acts of terrorism. Denying refugee status, now, to the victims of massive destruction is yet another unconscionable act that ignores human suffering, sidesteps long-standing tenets of the Geneva Convention and violates the founding premises of our nation.

SAH is a member of the American Council of Learned Societies, and supports the statements of many fellow ACLS societies, which together represent tens of thousands of educators calling for the immediate reversal of this unwarranted decision.

Unanimously Endorsed by the SAH Executive Committee