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Trump expands US travel ban to include Syria, Palestine

US adds five Arab and African countries to travel ban list as right-wing politicians intensify Islamophobic rhetoric.

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President Donald Trump speaks during a cabinet meeting at the White House, December 2 [Julia Demaree Nihkinson/AP Photo]

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Tuesday's order imposed a travel ban on six new countries – Palestine, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, South Sudan and Syria – in addition to the 12 initially made public in June.

The decree did not refer to Palestine, which Washington [does not recognise](#) as a state, by name or even as the occupied Palestinian territory.

Instead, it describes the Palestine category as “Palestinian Authority Documents” and refers to Palestinians as “individuals attempting to travel on PA-issued or endorsed travel documents”.

The decision comes weeks after Trump declared a “permanent pause” on migration from what he called “all Third World Countries” in response to the shooting of two National Guard troops in Washington, DC.

“Several US-designated terrorist groups operate actively in the West Bank or Gaza Strip and have murdered American citizens. Also, the recent war in these areas likely resulted in compromised vetting and screening abilities,” the White House said.

“In light of these factors, and considering the weak or nonexistent control exercised over these areas by the PA, individuals attempting to travel on PA-issued or endorsed travel documents cannot currently be properly vetted and approved for entry into the United States.”

Democratic Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, who is of Palestinian descent, slammed the ban, accusing Trump and his top aide [Stephen Miller](#) of pushing to alter the demographics of the country.

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“This administration’s racist cruelty knows no limits, expanding their travel ban to include even more African and Muslim-majority countries, even Palestinians fleeing a genocide,” she said in a social media post.

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The move to ban Palestinians from entering the US comes as Israel continues its daily deadly attacks in Gaza and the occupied West Bank, where Israeli settlers have killed at least [two US citizens](#) this year.

Meanwhile, the ban on Syrians coincides with rapprochement between Washington and Damascus after Syrian President [Ahmed al-Sharaa](#) visited the White House in November.

“While the country is working to address its security challenges in close coordination with the United States, Syria still lacks an adequate central authority for issuing passports or civil documents and does not have appropriate screening and vetting measures,” the White House said.

On Thursday, US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard cited the mass shooting that killed 15 people at a [Jewish festival](#) in Australia to laud Trump’s immigration restrictions.

“Islamists and Islamism is the greatest threat to the freedom, security, and prosperity of the United States and the entire world. It is probably too late for Europe – and maybe Australia,” she wrote on X.

“It is not too late for the United States of America. But it soon will be. Thankfully, President Trump has prioritized securing our borders and deporting known and suspected terrorists, and stopping mass, unvetted migration that puts Americans at risk.”

Trump’s Republican allies have been increasingly using Islamophobic rhetoric, and calling for Muslims to be blocked from entering the country.

On Sunday, Senator Tommy Tuberville called Islam a “cult”, baselessly accusing Muslims of aiming to “conquer” the West.

“Stop worrying about offending the pearl clutchers,” he wrote in a social media post. “We’ve got to SEND THEM HOME NOW or we’ll become the United Caliphate of America.”

When Trump first ran for president in 2015, he called for a complete ban on Muslims entering the US, and when he started his first term, he imposed a travel ban on several [Muslim-majority countries](#).

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