

Activists: Trump call for honor killings report targets Muslims

Kimberly Winston, Religion News Service Published 3:06 p.m. ET March 7, 2017 | Updated 3:08 p.m. ET March 7, 2017



(Photo: Nicholas Kamm, AFP/Getty Images)

As part of the goal to protect “the nation from foreign terrorist entry,” President Trump’s new executive order calls for a report on the number of honor killings carried out in the U.S. by “foreign nationals.”

Civil liberties advocates say the focus on honor killings, which a 2014 Justice Department reports shows make up about 23 to 27 of the approximately 15,000 U.S. murders reported to the FBI annually, is another attempt to target Muslims.

“It is a thinly veiled reference to stereotypes about Islam and Muslims,” said Daniel Mach, director of the American Civil Liberties Union’s Program on Freedom of Religion and Belief. “This reference to honor killings is part of a broader effort to smear an entire faith by the extreme acts of a few, and its inclusion in this order

bolsters the argument that this is simply another attempt at a Muslim ban.”

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The new order was lauded by many conservatives. James Jay Carafano of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative think tank, said: “While critics will continue to demonize the administration’s policies because they don’t fit their politics, Americans who crave a foreign policy that prioritizes American interests, puts a compassionate face on statecraft that reflects our values, and acts responsibly will find much to respect in the order.”

The new executive order states: “To be more transparent with the American people and to implement more effectively policies and practices that serve the national interest ... the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Attorney General, shall, consistent with applicable law and national security, collect and make publicly available ... information regarding the number and types of acts of gender-based violence against women, including so-called ‘honor killings,’ in the United States by foreign nationals.”

Honor killings are a form of violence against women practiced in some cultures. In an honor killing, family members conspire to murder one of their own, usually a woman, in the belief the killing will restore family honor. Victims have generally disobeyed other family members, usually a father.

[5 differences in Trump’s new travel ban](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/03/06/donald-trump-new-travel-ban/98801934/)

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Most scholars consider honor killings to stem from cultural rather than religious norms.

“The tragedy of violence directed at women because they are women is far too widespread and long-lived to be the product of any one religion or even one culture,” Jonathan Brown, an associate professor and chair of Islamic culture at Georgetown University, writes. “... Honor crimes are only part of the larger phenomenon of femicide, or the murder of a woman for some reason associated with her gender.”

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Writing at Think Progress, Aaron Rupar points out that while ordering a report on honor killings, President Trump has cut funding to Justice Department grants that combat violence against women. Approximately 1,500 U.S. women are killed in domestic violence incidents annually.

Honor killings are illegal in most countries, though penalties may be very light or law enforcement officials may blink at them. In 2015, there were approximately 1,100 honor killings in Pakistan alone and India reported an 800% rise in honor killings in 2015. Neither of those countries is on the executive order’s travel ban list.

[Trump’s travel ban executive order takes unusual pains to explain itself](http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/03/06/trumps-executive-order-takes-unusual-pains-explain-itself/98811920/)

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The Honour Based Violence Awareness Network reports there are approximately 5,000 honor killings internationally each year. None of those it lists are in the U.S., though 12 are in the United Kingdom.

But there have been honor killings in the U.S. Two Texas sisters, Sarah and Amina Said, were shot, allegedly by their father, Yaser Abdel Said, in 2008

for refusing an arranged marriage. Noor Almaleki was killed when she was struck by a car her father, Faleh Hassan Almaleki, was driving. She, too, rejected an arranged marriage.

Yaser Abdel Said immigrated to the U.S. from Egypt and Faleh Hassan Almaleki was from Iraq. Neither country is one of the six countries listed in the travel ban.

'Honor killings': 5 things to know

(<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/06/09/honor-killings-united-nations-pakistan/85642786/>)

The first executive order regarding a travel ban signed by the president Jan. 27 mentioned honor killings as “an act of bigotry or hatred.” It did not, as the new order does, require a report on their number in the United States.

It is unclear why the Trump administration requires information on honor killings. Cabinet members who announced its implementation in a White House press briefing did not discuss it or take questions from reporters.

The ACLU's Mach says regardless, its inclusion only supports the organization's argument that the order is unconstitutional.

“It will help illustrate the religious discrimination in the order,” he said.

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