

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND  
SOUTHERN DIVISION

INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE  
ASSISTANCE PROJECT, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

DONALD TRUMP, et al.,

Defendants.

Civil Action No.: 8:17-CV-00361-TDC

**DECLARATION OF BETH BARON,  
PRESIDENT OF MIDDLE EAST  
STUDIES ASSOCIATION, IN SUPPORT  
OF PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR  
PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

**DECLARATION OF BETH BARON, PRESIDENT OF MIDDLE EAST STUDIES  
ASSOCIATION**

I, Beth Baron, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, declare as follows:

1. I am the President of the Middle East Studies Association ("MESA"), a Plaintiff in the above-captioned case. In this capacity, I chair the Board of Directors, act as chief executive officer of the association, and respond to the interests and concerns of MESA members.
2. I am also a Professor of History at the City College and Graduate Center of the City University of New York. I was the editor of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* from 2009 to 2014 and am the author of numerous books and articles in Middle Eastern history. I regularly supervise graduate students and am familiar with the normal research practices of MESA members and the importance of international travel for both students and professors.
3. MESA is a non-profit learned society that brings together scholars, educators, and those interested in the study of the Middle East from all over the world. From its inception in 1966 with 51 founding members, MESA has increased its membership to more than 2,400 and

now serves as an umbrella organization for fifty-five institutional members. MESA's membership includes both graduate students and faculty working in the field of Middle East studies.

4. MESA and its members will be seriously harmed by the Executive Order issued on March 6, 2017 ("the Executive Order").

5. MESA has members who are from the six countries designated in the Executive Order and who are outside the United States. I understand that individuals in those circumstances who lack visas will not be able to obtain visas to travel to the United States under the terms of the Executive Order. This inability to come to the United States impacts MESA members' ability to attend academic conferences, including an annual meeting sponsored by MESA discussed below. For example, I am aware of an Iranian MESA member who is a doctoral student in Germany, who will not be able to travel to the United States for conferences, including the MESA conference which she firmly planned to attend, because the Executive Order will prevent her from obtaining a visa. Participation in academic conferences is crucial to the professional success of both graduate students and professors, and to their ability to fully engage with the ideas and scholarship of the broader Middle East studies community. Many important conferences, including the MESA annual meeting, take place in the United States.

6. Graduate students who are MESA members or are studying under MESA members in the United States often leave the country to complete field work or library and archival research for advanced degrees. I am aware that many such students from the six designated countries fear exclusion from the United States because of the Executive Order if they leave the country. Students who do not leave the United States, because they lack an assurance they will be permitted to reenter, will miss out on opportunities to engage in research and participate in

academic conferences. This is a serious hindrance to their academic careers, as research in this field is often best conducted abroad—and sometimes can only realistically be conducted abroad. Likewise, as noted above, participation in international conferences is a crucial part of the development of an academic career, and many major conferences in this field take place abroad.

7. Students in these circumstances will also lose their ability to visit family and friends abroad with an assurance they will be permitted to reenter. For example, I have learned of Iranian students affiliated with MESA who have cancelled plans to return home for Persian New Year, an important holiday that will occur on March 21, because of the Executive Order. Missing out on the chance to return home for Persian New Year is for many Iranian students comparable to Americans missing the chance to return home for the Thanksgiving holiday.

8. MESA members who are U.S.-based faculty will be impacted by the Executive Order because potential students from the designated countries will be unable to obtain visas to study with them in the United States. Similarly, for the reasons explained above, their current U.S.-based students from the designated countries will not be able to travel abroad for field work with an assurance they will be permitted to reenter. Students' decisions to forego international travel will impact faculty members' ability to facilitate quality research and educational opportunities, which is both critically important to faculty members' pedagogical and academic mission and will impact their ability to attract students, obtain grants, and produce scholarship.

9. Likewise, U.S.-based MESA faculty members will forego opportunities to travel abroad for research and academic conferences for fear that they will not be readmitted, or will be subjected to harassment or discrimination upon application for reentry to the United States. MESA has already been in communication with a number of faculty members who plan to forego international travel for these reasons.

10. MESA members will also be precluded from traveling to the designated countries for research or academic conferences when those countries institute reciprocal actions in response to the Executive Order. Iran restricted the issuance of certain visas to U.S. citizens in response to the prior, January 27 version of the Executive Order. A meeting of a MESA affiliated organization, the Association for the Study of Persianate Societies, planned for this month in Shiraz, Iran, was cancelled because of Iran's response to the prior version of the Executive Order. I am aware of at least one MESA member who was scheduled to present an academic paper at that conference but has now lost the opportunity to do so.

11. A large number of MESA members are Muslim or are institutional members whose officers, employees, or members are Muslim. I have heard from many Muslim members—colleagues, students, and friends—that they understand the message of the prior and current versions of the Order to be an attack on Islam. They have expressed the concern that the Orders marginalize them and they fear that they will be singled out for suspicion, interrogation, search, and discrimination because of the anti-Muslim message of these Orders.

12. MESA itself will also be harmed by the Executive Order. As part of its goal to advance learning, facilitate communication, and promote cooperation, MESA sponsors an annual meeting that is a leading international forum for scholarship, intellectual exchange, and pedagogical innovation. Approximately thirty percent of MESA members are based outside of the United States and must travel to the United States to attend MESA's annual meeting. At least 46 citizens of the six designated countries traveled to the United States to attend the last annual meeting. MESA expects that a substantial number of scholars will be unable to attend this year's meeting because of the restrictions imposed by the Executive Order.

13. MESA expects that, in part because of the stigmatic message of the Executive Order, many members based in Europe and the Middle East are likely to heed international calls to boycott academic conferences in the United States in protest of the Executive Order, including the MESA annual meeting. Academic conferences, and the MESA annual meeting in particular, are most successful when a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints are represented.

14. The absence of these scholars from the designated countries and from other countries will have a substantial negative effect on the meeting. These and other effects of the Executive Order will negatively impact MESA's mission of fostering the study and public understanding of the Middle East.

15. In addition, the Executive Order will cause serious financial harms to MESA. A large portion of MESA's annual budget is funded through annual membership dues and registration fees to attend the annual meeting. In 2016, annual meeting revenue was 47% of our overall revenue. This revenue represented the largest single source of income for MESA.

16. For each individual who cannot or will not attend the annual meeting, MESA will lose \$90 to \$250 in registration fees. We do not yet know how many individuals will forego registration and attendance at the meeting because of the travel ban. However, we anticipate significantly reduced registration and attendance, in part based on the reduction in the number of academic papers submitted for the meeting.

17. MESA's meetings held in Washington, DC, have had higher attendance and paper submission rates than our meetings held in other cities. MESA has consistently maintained and typically exceeded submission numbers in each successive DC meeting. In 2017, for the first time in 24 years, MESA has had a substantial decline in submissions from one DC meeting (2014) to another (2017). 133 fewer people submitted papers as part of pre-organized sessions in

2017 than in 2014. Applications for the 2017 meeting were due by February 15, 2017, shortly after the original Executive Order was signed.

18. Assuming based on this decline that, at a minimum, 133 people would have registered and attended the meeting but for the Executive Order, the loss of meeting registration would be approximately \$18,000. However, MESA anticipates greater financial loss as people other than those who would have submitted papers but did not do so decide not to attend the meeting and thus do not pay the registration fee because of the Executive Order.

19. Likewise, I am aware that some individuals who cannot or will not attend the meeting will allow their MESA membership to lapse as a result. For each such lapsed membership, MESA will lose \$25-300 in membership dues.

20. There are additional potential financial impacts if registration for the DC meeting is lower than it has been in previous years. MESA has a performance clause in its contract with the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, the location of the 2017 meeting. MESA guarantees that it will fill a minimum number of room nights and any shortfall must be paid by MESA. The penalty is equal to the single room rate for each night MESA falls short. MESA may be subject to this penalty because of the Executive Order.

21. MESA has already experienced a negative financial impact from the Executive Order, which is reflected in the lower submission numbers and loss of revenue. MESA anticipates that the decline in revenue it has already experienced because of the Executive Order will continue for the rest of the year if the Executive Order is in effect.

I hereby declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.



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Beth Baron

Executed this 10<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2017