

February 1, 2017

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

The members of the Alberta Graduate Provincial Advocacy Council (ab-GPAC) are saddened and concerned by the January 28, 2017 Executive Order banning citizens from Libya, Iran, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen from entering the US for 90 days, prohibiting the admission of refugees for 120 days, and barring indefinitely Syrian refugees. While this has been presented as a measure aimed at increasing security, it will have very real and negative effects on international scholars, as well as being undoubtedly injurious to one of the most vulnerable portions of the world's population – refugees who have already been displaced from home and country, leaving them with limited access to food, health care, and security.

International students, faculty, and staff bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, and ideas to our campuses and to institutions around the world, and the movement of people and ideas creates a global scholarly community. Collectively, graduate students across the province can take a leadership role in rejecting the fear and hatred we have seen at home in Quebec and abroad, and that is driving these divisive and intolerant policies. Canada's strength is its diversity, and we must reach out across our differences to continue to grow and learn from one another.

Over 1,500 graduate students in Alberta originate from the seven countries banned from the US, and these students may find their academic and professional activities abruptly impacted, including attending conferences and job interviews, or conducting research. Furthermore, students may be unable to visit friends and family in the US, have issues with travel routes that require stopovers in the US, and their friends and families may also be directly impacted by the travel ban.

Each of our institutions is developing measures to assist anyone affected by the ban, and we encourage you to reach out to your supervisor, your department, or your Faculty of Graduate Studies if you are experiencing difficulties (below we have listed links to resources at each of the Institutions). In addition, some students may be feeling stressed or upset about the tone and implications of these new policies, and we encourage you to seek out support from counselling services, Chaplains, or other groups on your campus, or from trusted friends and family.

For those students who would like to take action, you can write to your Member of Parliament to request improvements in policies for refugees applying to Canada (e.g. request the government rescind the 'Safe Third Country Agreement', eliminate the 'Designated Countries of Origin' list, and remove the cap on private sponsors for Syrian and Iraqi refugees); donate to organizations supporting individual rights (e.g. the ACLU) or groups in Canada such as the Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec; volunteer with groups supporting refugees and immigrants in your city; donate blood; seek out opportunities to form relationships with people from a different religion or background from you; and for US students, you can also contact your elected officials in the States where you are registered to vote to voice your concerns.

We welcome your input, and if you have further ideas or suggestions on how you or we can help, please contact us at abgpacchair@gmail.com and/or abgpacvicechair@gmail.com.

On behalf of ab-GPAC,



Xiao Yang Fang (ab-GPAC Chair)



Sarah Ficko (ab-GPAC Vice-Chair)

Links to resources at each of the Comprehensive Academic and Research Institutes:

Athabasca University

University statement: <http://news.athabascau.ca/news/response-to-the-us-travel-ban/>

University of Alberta

A joint statement from the GSA and the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research was sent out to all graduate students on January 31.

University statement: <http://blog.ualberta.ca/search/label/From%20the%20President%27s%20Desk>

University website: <https://www.ualberta.ca/travel-ban-information>

University of Calgary

A statement by the GSA was sent out to all graduate students on January 31 and further resources were provided at the January Graduate Representatives Council on January 31.

Faculty of Graduate Studies resources: <http://www.grad.ucalgary.ca/news/message-dean-graduate-studies-us-travel-ban>

University statement: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/utoday/issue/2017-01-29/university-calgary-supporting-community-members-affected-us-travel-ban>

University of Lethbridge

University statement: <https://www.uleth.ca/notice/notices/president-mike-mahon-statement-response-us-executive-order#.WJH6lxEiyUk>