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Trump's Muslim Ban: Another Symptom of the War on Terror

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On January 28, President Trump signed an executive order denying entry for 90 days to the United States for individuals from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Sudan, Libya, and Somalia. A spokeswoman from the Department of Homeland Security told Reuters the ban would prevent people from banned countries who are green card holders from returning to the United States if

they travel abroad. Trump defended the order, claiming, “it’s not a Muslim ban,” but in an interview with the Christian Broadcasting Network he noted Christian refugees would receive priority in resettlement process. The Huffington Post reported there have been no fatal terror attacks in the United States committed by immigrants from the seven countries banned.

Protests erupted at major airports across the country in response to the ban. The ban, rather than an anomaly induced by Trump’s presidency, was enabled by a long campaign of misinformation and a destructive U.S. foreign policy predicated on fears over terrorism since 9/11. These misconceptions were manipulated to manufacture support for the Iraq War, and increase U.S. intervention, weapons exports, and bombing campaigns throughout the Middle East. Despite a congressional inquiry suggesting the Saudi Arabian government supported the 9/11 hijackers and helped fund terrorist organizations, Saudi Arabia’s prominent status as allies and wealthy business partners with America’s political elite and their donors have inoculated them from being targeted under the “war on terror.” Instead a broader, sweeping generalization has blanketed all Muslims and the countries where Muslims make up large portions of the population as terrorists. Funding has been poured into military, defense, intelligence agencies, and law enforcement under the pretenses of fighting terrorism, leading to a hysteria of Islamophobia and an abundance of illegal activities conducted by our own government.

The illegal prison in Guantanamo Bay was opened under the pretenses of the war on terror, but the files whistleblower Chelsea Manning leaked revealed many of its prisoners, referred to officially as detainees due to the prison violating the Geneva Convention, were innocent or low-level offenders.

Manning revealed the war crimes the U.S. military were committing in Iraq and getting away with in the name of the war on terror. Torture and indiscriminate killings of civilians were commonplace, under a “shoot first, ask questions later,” mentality. Manning also revealed U.S. military contractors acting complicit or participating in illegal child trafficking. Rather than inhibit terrorism and promote peace, the Iraq War and the atrocities committed in it fueled unrest in the Middle East, all while placing the blame for perpetual warfare on the pervasive threat of terrorism.

Edward Snowden risked his life and livelihood to reveal the NSA’s illegal mass surveillance program, violating privacy rights of every American citizen, foreign national, and foreign leaders, all under the veil of fighting terrorism. Despite the revelations, Snowden has widely been vilified for exposing these secrets, while Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, who committed perjury in front of congress before Snowden’s leak, was provided with impunity. Clapper, it is important to note, oversaw satellite imagery operations searching for WMDs in Iraq while the Bush Administration dragged the United States into war under false information.

Several media outlets, from the Guardian, New York Times, and the Intercept have covered cases where the FBI has manufactured terrorism plots. Entrapment and unethical use of informants have been used to arrest individuals involved in terrorism plots set up by the FBI. The motives of manufacturing these plots have boosted the image of the FBI in the war on terror, provided corroborating evidence for increased or sustained funding to the FBI’s terror programs, sustained fear of terrorism, and provided politicians from both political parties to exploit the

arrests made from these cases as evidence they supported the war on terror, that these campaigns were being successful, and that despite the perceived continuous threats, the current political power hierarchy had everything under control.

Between 2002 and 2011, NSEER, the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System, acted as a registry database for Muslims, treating all Muslims as suspects or accomplices in the war on terror. The no-fly list swelled from 16 individuals to 47,000 since 9/11, many of which have been overt instances of discrimination against Muslims. Both Republicans and Democrats have perpetuated this discrimination and the use of this list and similar watch lists secretly constructed by government agencies, which have included babies listed.

A vicious cycle of interventionist foreign policy has created political vacuums and instability in the Middle East for terrorist groups to thrive in. This perpetual warfare enables politicians to continue fear mongering to the public.

Barack Obama ran on campaign promises to promote peace and ease tensions and unrest in the Middle East. Under the Obama Administration and Hillary Clinton's service as Secretary of State, weapons exports to countries in the Middle East, like Saudi Arabia, exponentially increased. Those weapons in turn have been used to commit human rights atrocities in Yemen. Weapons exports more than doubled under the Obama Administration compared to the Bush Administration. U.S. bombing campaigns increased to seven countries. The Obama Administration embraced the highly controversial use of drone strikes, increasingly relying on it despite the lack of oversight and accountability for the program killing civilians instead of intended targets.

The war on terror's record has really been a war on the Middle East. In that war, Muslims, Arabs and anyone who can be categorized into the stereotypical archetype of a terrorist have often been victimized, attacked, discriminated against, or killed in the name of fighting terrorism. Trump's recent ban on Muslims from seven Muslim countries is a symptom of this ongoing war used to justify horrible things.