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The Muslim Ban Is Finally Gone—3 Travelers Share What That Means for Them

The ban split up families, made many travelers feel uncomfortable, and took away numerous opportunities.

BY IMANI BASHIR

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On [Inauguration Day](#), President Joe Biden signed the [Proclamation on Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to the United States](#), overturning former President Donald Trump's 2017 "[Muslim ban](#)." The executive order, which prompted [protests across the U.S.](#), had [banned foreign nationals from Muslim-majority countries](#) including Sudan, Syria,

Yemen, Iraq, Libya, Iran, and Somalia. (Chad, North Korea, and Venezuela were later added.) It sent a stark message of discrimination to not only Muslim Americans, but **Muslims around the world**, many of whom found themselves separated from family members and loved ones.

We spoke to three Muslim travelers about how the four-year ban impacted them—and their expectations for traveling in a **post-COVID world**.

Fabima Abdi is a Somali stay-at-home mother based in London. She has often faced anxiety about traveling to the U.S.

“My family and I were refugees that escaped from war, so we created a life that we thought would be better and have traveled the globe. However, with my husband being American and my daughter having dual citizenship, the Muslim ban was a constant stress. I was always separated for extra screenings—even while traveling with my toddler. It’s hard enough **traveling with a baby**, but then you find TSA has no sort of empathy for a crying baby, sifting through my personal belongings and making me repack them, without help, simply because of my name or the fact that I wear hijab.

I like that the ban has been lifted, but I don’t feel comfortable traveling to the U.S., even **post-COVID**, which is sad because my daughter has an entire family there. I am truly triggered by the constant discrimination of immigrants. It is time to recognize that we all contribute to the global society.”

Kayem Muammer is a Libyan-American hip-hop artist who is currently living nomadically. His travels were repeatedly impacted by the ban.

“While I personally have a U.S. passport, the Muslim ban affected me both personally and professionally. It is a precarious position to be in. I had been placed on the ‘No Fly List’ for years prior to the ban, and was subjected to this discriminatory list through late 2018. Although I was never given any actual reason for being on the list, there was one common thread I noticed between me and the dozen or so friends who I knew were also on it: we were all first-generation Americans with parents from Libya.

My heritage followed me around like a bad body odor. In 2020, I remember how undignified it felt to be pulled off of an airplane in Detroit—during a time when I was perpetually getting ‘**SSSS**’ on my passport, or ‘Secondary Security Selectee Status,’ a designation given to anyone deemed as a potential ‘threat’ to National Security. As ridiculous as this sounded to me, I followed all of the rules: I showed up early to flights, allowed the TSA supervisor to **pat me**

down, interrogate me, search through my phone, and take photos of every page of my private notebooks. The feeling of oppression was palpable, but I just wanted to keep my head down and get to my destination. [in Detroit], after getting on the plane, an employee approached me and told me that I had to get off. They provided no reason, no refund, and no explanation.

That was just one instance of countless times where I felt the ramifications of the Muslim ban. However, I know friends who were impacted even more directly. The Muslim ban caused fragmented family situations all over the globe. I'm relieved that it is finally lifted, but it may be too little too late for many of the lives affected."



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Fareedah Shabeed, a tech entrepreneur based in Maryland, was raised in Saudi Arabia and the U.S.

"As someone who has traveled and lived outside of the U.S., the Muslim ban made me feel extremely uncomfortable in a place that everyone should definitely feel welcomed in. Having the ban lifted means a lot to me. It lets me know that we are making strides to be a country that feels safe for someone like me who loves to travel, loves to cross borders.

As a Muslim it's already beyond stressful to travel, especially if you have a 'Muslim name' or you have a headscarf on. As a Black Muslim woman who does wear a headscarf, traveling, for me, isn't as simple as just packing a bag. I have to think how I might appear or be perceived

based on so many factors. Having that ban lifted it feels like one less thing [weighing] on my shoulders. I do believe it's a step forward.”

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