

Immigration ban includes green card holders, clarifies US; Trump says it's working 'very nicely'

29/01/2017 15:05 by admin

Washington: Unfazed by growing criticism, US President Donald Trump has asserted that his "very strict ban" on foreign nationals from seven Muslim-majority countries was working "very nicely" and should continue even as the the Department of Homeland Security said that the ban also applies to green card holders from those countries.

US President Donald Trump with Defense Secretary James Mattis

Keeping his election promise, Trump in an executive order signed Friday halted the arrival of foreign nationals from seven Muslim-majority countries in the US.

Trump has ordered "extreme vetting" of people entering the US from seven Muslim-majority countries and banned the entry of Syrian refugees until further notice, as part of new measures to "keep radical Islamic terrorists" out of America.

The countries named in the order are Iran, Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Somalia.

"It will bar green card holders," acting Department of Homeland Security (DHS) spokeswoman Gillian Christensen told reporters yesterday.

Green cards serve as proof of an individual's permanent legal residence in the US.

A senior administration official clarified that green card holders from the seven countries affected in the order who are currently outside the US will need a case-by-case waiver to return to America.

Green card holders in the US will have to meet with a consular officer before departing the country, the official said.

The order halts the country's Syrian refugee resettlement programme and all refugee resettlement for 120 days as well as imposing a 90-day ban on people from seven Muslim-majority countries.

The administration says the halt in the resettlement programme is designed to give it time to tighten the vetting process for refugees. The order also gives Christian refugees priority in the resettlement process.

"If you were a Muslim you could come in, but if you were a Christian, it was almost impossible and the reason that was so unfair, everybody was persecuted in all fairness, but they were chopping off the heads of everybody but more so the Christians," Trump said in an interview with Christian Broadcasting Network on Friday.

"And I thought it was very, very unfair. So we are going to help them," he said.

According to a Pew Research Center report, the US has accepted nearly equal number of Muslim and Christian refugees in 2016.

Several US airports were rocked by protests and arrests after the order was signed.

Trump defends his decision, saying it a measure to "keep radical Islamic terrorists" out of America.

"It's working out very nicely. You see it in the airports, you see it all over. It's working out very nicely," Trump told

reporters yesterday.

"We are going to have a very, very strict ban and we are going to have extreme vetting, which we should have had in this country for many years," Trump said.

He, however, denied that barring refugees from several predominantly Muslim nations amounted to a ban on Muslims. "It's not a Muslim ban, but we are totally prepared," Trump said.

The order, which bars Syrian refugees and halts the country's refugee resettlement programme for four months has triggered widespread criticism, including from Google's India-born CEO Sundar Pichai and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg.

Terming it a "painful" decision, Pichai said the move will affect at least 187 Google employees.

Indian-American Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella posted a note on LinkedIn, saying the company "will continue to advocate on this important topic."

He said as an immigrant and the company's CEO he had "both experienced and seen the positive impact that immigration has on our company, for the country, and for the world."

"We share the concerns about the impact of the executive order on our employees from the listed countries, all of whom have been in the United States lawfully, and we're actively working with them to provide legal advice and assistance," the company said in a statement.

The company said it was aware of 76 employees who belonged to the seven banned countries mentioned in the order. Zuckerberg has also criticised the decision to severely limit immigrants and refugees from certain Muslim-majority countries, saying America is a nation of immigrants and should be proud of it.

"Like many of you, I'm concerned about the impact of the recent executive orders signed by President Trump," Zuckerberg wrote on his Facebook page.

- (With PTI inputs)