

Speech for the Solidarity for Humanity Rally
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On December 7, 2015, Donald Trump released the following statement: “Donald J. Trump is calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on.”

When I first heard this statement, I didn’t consider it abstract. I didn’t think he didn’t really mean it or that he wouldn’t pursue it as a policy if he became president.

Instead, I thought about my Muslim parents who brought my brother and me to the United States from Pakistan in December of 2000, when I was eight years old. I thought about my Pakistani relatives who, after September 11, 2001, found it much more difficult to visit us and perhaps now would never be able to. I thought about the trips we took to our family home in Lahore every few years and whether those trips could make us liabilities or contribute to us being seen as suspicious. I also went back to my childhood when in the wake of September 11 and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it became much harder to be Pakistani and Muslim in America.

The more I felt that America was my home, the more reminders there were that my family and I would be perpetually foreign, perpetually suspect, perpetually untrustworthy.

Freedom and human rights are not predicated on being able to prove you’re not a criminal who wants to destroy the West. Human rights don’t come at the expense of losing your privacy through increased surveillance or being subjected to intrusive searches and racial profiling at airports. No one should have to pay the price of undergoing hate crimes and hate speech just to make a home in a community. And yet all of these are challenges that Muslim American families, like my own, are subjected to every single day.

According to the New York Times, hate crimes against Muslim Americans were up 78% over the course of 2015. Multiple sources reported a surge in hate crimes following the election of Donald Trump. That is what Trump’s America looks like to me. It looks like a place where ordinary Muslims who just want to live their lives in peace and harmony, like anyone else, have to fear for their lives and well-being. This is unacceptable, and I refuse to let this happen to my country.

Our communities are subjected to increased surveillance, to violence at home and abroad, and to racial profiling. Donald Trump and his supporters have spoken about a potential Muslim registry. The human rights of Muslim Americans are violated all the time, and it’s time now to stand up for each other in solidarity. We can’t go backward. We can’t go back to a time when religious minorities were targeted by the government. I thought the worst treatment of Muslim Americans was over a few years after 9/11, but now, it’s worse than ever.

I am not a criminal. I am not a terrorist. I deserve human rights and the ability to live peacefully as a Muslim American. My family deserves that too. All Muslim Americans do. If we allow Islamophobic rhetoric to go unchecked, if we don’t stand up when we see hate crimes being

committed, if we don't actively and publicly oppose Islamophobic policies, we're contributing to a dangerous system that won't stop.

I'm tired of being told that our country belongs to non-Muslims or that non-Muslims are always foreign. Our country belongs to us too, and as Muslim Americans, we deserve to exist and to enjoy our full human rights.

Thank you for allowing me to speak here today and for listening to me. I stand with you all in solidarity, and I hope I can count on the same from you.