

That “Trump Muslim Ban” Is Still With Us

by Hugh Fitzgerald



A column in the *Boston Sunday Globe* for February 9 – “Trump’s acquittal could be a dangerous turning point” – by Michael A. Cohen, caught my attention, or rather, its first two paragraphs caught my attention, infuriated me, and I saw no reason to read further.

Here is what Cohen the *Globe* columnist wrote:

Three years ago, when the Trump administration announced a hastily crafted ban on travel to the United States from seven majority-Muslim countries, thousands of Americans rose up in defiance. Some went to airports and others marched through city streets to fight an executive order clearly motivated by

racism and xenophobia.

One week ago, the Trump administration expanded its travel ban to six countries, four of them in Africa—including the region's largest nation, Nigeria. According to some estimates, nearly a quarter of the 1.2 billion residents of the African continent will now be affected."

Let's start with the first sentence. Right off the bat, it introduces a colossal error.

The "travel ban" by the Trump Administration was not placed on "seven majority-Muslim countries." Has Michael Cohen already forgotten which countries were included? If he has, could he not have taken three-to-four seconds to find out, online, what everyone else knows to be true – that the first "travel ban" includes seven countries, of which five are Muslim-majority, but two others, North Korea and Venezuela, are not. He says that this executive order was "clearly motivated by racism and xenophobia." There was no "racism" involved. Even had the ban covered only Muslim-majority countries, it would not have been motivated by "racism." Distrust and dislike of Islam, and of those who take the Qur'anic comments to heart, do not constitute "racism." The Qur'an instructs Muslims that they are the "best of peoples," while non-Muslims are "the most vile of created beings." It further contains more than 100 verses that command Muslims to fight, to kill, to smite at the necks of, to strike terror in the hearts of, Infidels. If we are leery of, and hostile to, those who take those verses to heart, that does not make us "racists." For Michael Cohen, "racism" is the all-purpose charge, which he is eager to affix to any anti-Islamic sentiment, no matter how reasonable. As for "xenophobia," if that travel ban was placed on seven countries, that leaves 186 countries whose citizens – foreigners all – are still allowed to come to the U.S. How is that "xenophobia"?

Not only was that ban not placed on “seven majority-Muslim countries,” but two Muslim-majority countries originally considered for the ban – Iraq and Sudan – were in the end not placed on the list, because the information they supplied about their nationals to the American government was deemed sufficient for security purposes.

The reason for the list was never to punish or discriminate against Muslims, but to prevent the arrival of visitors from countries that could not supply enough information to the American government about them; it was a purely security measure, not an expression of “racism” or “xenophobia.”

When the ban was challenged in the courts, it was upheld by the Supreme Court in *Hawaii v. Trump*. The majority opinion explained the reason for the ban: “The Proclamation placed entry restrictions on the nationals of eight [Iraq was later removed] foreign states whose systems for managing and sharing information about their nationals the President deemed inadequate.”

Later, because of the close cooperation Iraqi authorities offered the Americans, that country was dropped from the list.

The Court found that the travel ban on those seven states was amply justified by reasons of security. Cohen makes no mention of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Hawaii v. Trump*, for if he did, he would have had to explain what led the Court to uphold the ban, and he wants his readers to think there was no conceivable security justification; the ban was merely an expression of Trump’s “racism” and “xenophobia.”

Cohen also fails to note that while five Muslim-majority countries were affected by the ban, fifty-two other Muslim-majority countries remained entirely unaffected. He could also have found out, from a few minutes of googling, that 95% of the world’s Muslims remain unaffected by the ban. Perhaps he did find that out, but since it didn’t support his claim of a

“Muslim ban,” chose to pass over that figure in silence.

In his second paragraph, Cohen denounces the latest ban, which has been placed not on those seeking merely to travel to the U.S., but on those seeking permanent residence in the United States.

He writes:

One week ago, the Trump administration expanded its travel ban to six countries, four of them in Africa—including the region’s largest nation, Nigeria. According to some estimates, nearly a quarter of the 1.2 billion residents of the African continent will now be affected.

Notice that he does not here claim to find any anti-Muslim bias; instead, that charge hangs, unspoken, in the air. What Cohen should have done, had he been in a mood to tell the truth, is list the six countries now added to the ban – Nigeria, Eritrea, Sudan, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, and Tanzania. He might then have noted that Nigeria is split 50-50 between its Christians and Muslims, but that since the overwhelming majority of Nigerians who come to the U.S. are Christians, it is they who will be most affected by the ban. He then might have added that Eritrea has, according to the U.S. government, a slight Christian majority of 50%, and a Muslim minority of 48%; Sudan is 97% Muslim; Kyrgyzstan is 85% Muslim; Tanzania is 35% Muslim; Myanmar is only 4% Muslim. Three of the six countries – Eritrea, Myanmar, and Tanzania – have non-Muslim majorities, and while a fourth, Nigeria, is evenly split between Muslims and Christians, the new ban will negatively affect many more Christians. As Cohen cannot say that this ban will predominately affect Muslims, he prefers to remain silent.

Despite the Trump Administration’s sober presentation of its reasons for instituting the ban (which was not, *pace* Michael Cohen, a “hastily-crafted ban,” but took many months for the

Administration to compile), Cohen never offers readers a chance to consider those reasons, that a majority of the Supreme Court found so compelling.

Let's repeat, to clear up any lingering effects of Cohen's *desinformatsiya*, what we know about the Trump Administration's two bans:

Seven states, five of them Muslim-majority, were included in the initial ban. The countries listed were unable to provide sufficient information about their nationals to the American government, information deemed necessary to our security. The ban is not total. Individuals affected may apply for a waiver.

Only five of 57 Muslim-majority states were affected. 95% of the world's Muslims remained unaffected by this first ban.

The second ban affected an additional six countries, only three of which were Muslim-majority, while one, Nigeria, is split equally between Muslims and Christians, but it is Christians who, because they make up most of those Nigerians seeking residence in the United States, are most affected.

These two paragraphs by Cohen offer one more attempt – there have been so many – by journalists to misrepresent the Trump administration's travel bans as anti-Islam "racism." These scribblers and pontificators ignore the justification for the ban that the Administration has provided, and that the Supreme Court found convincing. Our task – yours and mine – is to keep sweeping back the tide of misinformation, hoping the other side, those stout Defenders of the Faith and People of Islam, will eventually tire of being held up for critical inspection, as Michael A. Cohen of the *Boston Globe* has been here and, just possibly, go on to some other subject, assuming one can be found, where they are likely to do less harm.

First published in