

# Baptists condemn Trump's call for ban on Muslims entering U.S.

December 8, 2015

Baptist leaders of varied stripes joined in denouncing presidential candidate Donald Trump's call for a ban on Muslims entering the United States.

Trump urged "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on," a [news release](#) from his campaign stated.

Previously, Trump had endorsed surveillance of mosques and expressed willingness to establish a database of all Muslims living in the United States.

The news release announcing Trump's position on Muslims entering the nation cites a poll from the controversial Center for Security Policy claiming one-fourth of the Muslims polled said violence against Americans is justified as part of global jihad.

"Where this hatred comes from and why we will have to determine," Trump stated. "Until we are able to determine and understand this problem and the dangerous threat it poses, our country cannot be the victims of horrendous attacks by people that believe only in jihad and have no sense of reason or respect for human life."

## **'Exploiting popular fear'**

The proposal to ban Muslims from entering the country "is un-American,

unworkable, counterproductive and embarrassing,” said Brent Walker, executive director of the [Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty](#).

“It’s no more than disgusting demagoguery—exploiting popular fear and fanning pervasive anti-Muslim bigotry for political gain,” Walker said. “Americans deserve better than this from those who seek to lead.”

### **‘Reckless’ rhetoric**

Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, likewise [condemned](#) Trump’s proposal.

“Anyone who cares an iota about religious liberty should denounce this reckless, demagogic rhetoric,” Moore said.

The United States “should fight, and fight hard, against radical Islamic jihadism,” Moore said, and that includes closing its borders to people suspected of involvement with terrorists.

### **Stand for religious liberty**

“But the government should not penalize law-abiding people, especially those who are American citizens, for holding their religious convictions,” he insisted.

“Muslims are an unpopular group these days. And I would argue that nonviolent Muslim leaders have a responsibility to call out terror and violence and jihad. At the same time, those of us who are Christians ought to stand up for religious liberty, not just when our rights are violated but on behalf of others too.

“Make no mistake. A government that can shut down mosques simply because they are mosques can shut down Bible studies because they are Bible studies. A government that can close the borders to all Muslims simply on the basis of their religious belief can do the same thing for

evangelical Christians. A government that issues ID badges for Muslims simply because they are Muslims can, in the fullness of time, demand the same for Christians because we are Christians.”

### **Contrary to American principles**

Ferrell Foster, director of ethics and justice with the [Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission](#), likewise characterized Trump’s proposal as contrary to America’s historic commitment to religious liberty.

“It is sad that a candidate for president would say something so contrary to the founding and sustaining principles of this great nation,” Foster said. “Religious liberty stands at our nation’s core, and openness to immigrants has filled our population with a diverse people unparalleled anywhere on earth. America is at its best when it allows people to pursue their religious beliefs and when it treats all people with respect and dignity.

“These principles of liberty and openness are also reflected in Scripture, which is the ultimate source of authority for Christians.

“If we impose a religion test regarding Muslims in this regard, a religion test regarding Christians could be applied to some other case.”

### **Desecrating ‘this holy legacy’**

Baptists, of all people, should oppose Trump’s proposed ban on Muslims, added *Baptist Standard* Editor Marv Knox.

“For generations, Baptists were a persecuted minority—both in Europe and in America,” Knox said. “Baptists were imprisoned, and some were killed, for refusing to baptize their children and for insisting on the right to worship and serve God according to the dictates of their consciences.”

That’s why Baptists became champions of religious liberty, he added.

“For 400 years, Baptists have advocated on behalf of people of all faiths—including those [our foreparents called ‘Turks,’](#) whom we now call Muslims,” Knox said. “Any current Baptist who supports Trump’s proposed ban desecrates this holy legacy.”