

Americans, Atheists, Christians, Jews and Israelis Can't Enter—or Leave—These Countries Safely, if at All

With all of the misinformation and confusion about the temporary travel ban, Americans should keep in mind that there are over three dozen countries they cannot visit safely, or ever.

Since Jan. 15, 2016, the U.S. Department of State has issued 41 travel warnings to U.S. passport holders for 41 countries “due to an unpredictable security situation subject to rapid deterioration, activities of armed groups, and violent crime.”

More than half are Islamic-controlled countries/territories: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, the West Bank/Gaza and Yemen.

If U.S. passport holders ignore these warnings, here's what they can expect in just a few countries on the list:

- **Algeria:** Even with a certificate of accommodation from Algerian authorities and an invitation from a registered travel agency in Algeria, non-immigrant visas are rarely issued and entry is rarely permitted. Safety is also unlikely.
- **Iran:** No American can travel to Iran independently. Even if through the sponsor/invitation/visa process, U.S. citizens with valid visas are regularly refused entry at the border with no explanation. There is no U.S. Embassy in Iran. (Even the U.S. Navy was unsafe in international

waters despite the U.S. State Department illegally transferring more than \$4 billion to Iran.)

- Libya: It's nearly impossible to obtain a visa, but plausible if a Libyan sponsor applies for the traveler in Libya first. Still, they might be denied. Safety is also unlikely, as it was for U.S. citizens killed on Sept. 12, 2012.
- Saudi Arabia: Saudi Arabia issues no tourist visas. No one can enter Saudi Arabia without a sponsor, an official invitation, oversight of a particular licensed agency and approved accompaniment and itinerary. Violating/overstaying visa terms results in incarceration and hefty fines.
- Somalia is the second least-visited country on earth for a reason. Even with a sponsor, invitation letter and paid protection from pirates, entry without being kidnapped is unlikely.
- Turkey: Turkey claims to be a free country to which anyone can travel but the American most recently arrested and detained indefinitely in prison is Wheaton College graduate and missionary, Pastor Andrew Brunson, falsely charged with "membership in an armed terrorist organization."
- The West Bank/Gaza: Gaza is under control of Hamas, a terrorist organization; entry is prohibited. Even to Israeli citizens, travel is restricted in the West Bank in Bethlehem, Jericho and Hebron.

When it comes to Israeli passport holders, these 17 Islamic countries have for years prohibited entry:

Algeria, Bangladesh, Brunei, Indonesia (fluctuates), Iran, Iraq (except Iraqi Kurdistan), Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia (fluctuates), Oman, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan,

Syria, United Arab Emirates (can travel through but can't be admitted) and Yemen.

And—all non-Israeli passports holders—anyone who has traveled to Israel, or whose passports have a used or unused Israeli visa—are prohibited entry to Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen.

When it comes to religious or ideological views, consider how just one of these countries, America's "greatest Gulf state ally," Saudi Arabia, treats atheists, Christians, Jews and non-Muslims seeking entry.

Atheists: According to a recent law, atheism is a criminal act and is considered a "terrorist offense." Entry to atheists would be denied, with few exceptions.

Christians: On the rare occasion that a Christian is permitted entry, they are prohibited from discussing or displaying anything publicly related to their beliefs, including wearing a cross, worshipping in public, building a church, or even appearing to disparage or not follow Saudi customs. Doing so would lead to their arrest, imprisonment and/or deportation, as would overstaying their visa. But they also could be arrested at any time for any perceived offense.

Jews: Only recently were Jews temporarily permitted entry because of their U.S. diplomatic status. No Jew is permitted to do business with or in Saudi Arabia.

All non-Muslims: Upon entry, all visa-holders must be chaperoned, all women must be escorted and covered and all non-Muslims are prohibited from driving on certain roads and from going near or visiting Mecca.

By contrast, people from all of the above countries are permitted entry into the United States in several capacities.
{eoa}