

Proposal Prompts Calls to Ban Trump From UK, Israel

Israeli politicians and more than 370,000 Britons urged their governments on Wednesday to bar Donald Trump from their countries after the Republican presidential front-runner said Muslims should be denied entry into the United States.

The calls were part of a growing global backlash against Trump's proposal that cut across nationalities and religions, and began to hit the real estate mogul's brand in the Middle East.

Although Israeli politicians demanded Trump be blocked from a planned visit, a Dec. 28 meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was still on. In addition to the online petition calling for a ban on Trump from the United Kingdom, a Scottish university revoked his honorary degree.

A major chain of Middle East department stores halted sales of the real estate mogul's glitzy "Trump Home" line of lamps, mirrors and jewelry boxes.

Even China weighed in with indirect criticism of Trump's comments, which have been condemned by the White House, U.S. congressional leaders, the United Nations, the prime ministers of France and Britain, a wide array of human and civil rights groups and many of Trump's Republican rivals and potential Democratic opponents in the November 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Trump, who leads opinion polls in the Republican nominating race, on Monday called for blocking Muslims, including would-be immigrants, students and tourists, from entering the country following last week's deadly shootings in California by two Muslims who authorities said were radicalized.

Left- and right-wing Israeli politicians, as well as Israeli Arab lawmakers, condemned Trump's remarks and said he should be barred from visiting. Omer Bar-Lev of the main center-left opposition party, the Zionist Union, took to Twitter to call Trump a "racist."

"I recommend fighting terrorist and extremist Islam, but I would not declare a boycott of, ostracism against or war on Muslims in general," Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz, a senior Likud lawmaker and Netanyahu confidant, told Israel's Army Radio.

Netanyahu issued a statement saying he rejected Trump's remarks but the visit, set two weeks ago, would go ahead as planned and did not indicate support for Trump.

"The prime minister rejects the recent comments by Donald Trump with regard to Muslims. Israel respects all religions and diligently guards the rights of its citizens," a statement from Netanyahu's office said.

In Britain, the number of signatories to the petition demanding Trump be banned from visiting exceeded 370,000 and was growing fast. But the country's finance minister, George Osborne, said the former reality TV star should not be banned.

In the past, people have been banned from entering the United Kingdom for fostering hatred that might provoke intercommunity violence.

Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, Scotland, revoked an honorary degree it had awarded Trump in 2010, saying on Twitter that his statements "are wholly incompatible with the ethos and values of the university."

In China, home to about 20 million Muslims, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said she could not comment on internal U.S. matters but said China believed "the

international community should make a concerted effort to fight terrorism, and at the same time we have always opposed linking terrorism to any specific ethnic group or religion.”

Middle East Impact

In the Middle East, sales of “Trump Home” products took a hit. The Landmark Group, one of the region’s biggest retail companies with 190 stores in the Middle East, Africa and Pakistan, said it was pulling all Trump merchandise off its shelves. The company did not give any details on the value of the contract.

Although there were no other immediate announcements of business partners breaking with Trump, others made clear they were uneasy using his brand name in the Middle East, where he has been actively expanding his footprint in recent years, heavily concentrated in the Gulf business hub of Dubai.

A former Trump business partner in Dubai, construction billionaire Khalaf al-Habtoor, said Trump had wrecked his prospects for successful future collaborations in the region.

“He is really creating war. He’s creating hatred between Muslims and Christians,” Habtoor, who at one time held the contract to build a later-canceled Trump International Hotel & Tower in Dubai, told Reuters.

“Muslims have invested hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars (in America), creating jobs for Americans. They can go invest it somewhere else.”

Trump has courted controversy during his White House run with derogatory comments about immigrants and controversial proposals to deport undocumented immigrants and implement a database to keep track of Muslim Americans.

Some supporters rallied to his defense. Evangelist Franklin Graham, son of legendary evangelist Billy Graham, posted on

Facebook that Trump was echoing his own longheld belief that Muslim immigration should be stopped until “we can properly vet them or until the war with Islam is over.” The post had nearly 75,000 likes on Facebook.

Qatar Airways Chief Executive Officer Akbar Al Baker said he disagreed with the proposed ban but voiced support for Trump, saying the proposal was meant to gain political mileage.

“I don’t think he means it. He has many Muslim friends. He has investments in Muslim countries. And at the same time he has only put this out of context just to gain some more votes,” he said.

Closer to home, former boxing champion Muhammad Ali took an apparent jab at Trump without mentioning him by name in a statement to NBC News headlined “Presidential Candidates Proposing to Ban Muslim Immigration to the United States.”

“We as Muslims have to stand up to those who use Islam to advance their own personal agenda,” Ali said in the statement, according to the network.

Trump defended his proposal on Tuesday, comparing his plan to ban Muslims to the U.S. government’s World War Two detainment of Japanese-Americans. He said President Franklin Roosevelt had overseen the internment of more than 110,000 people in U.S. government camps after Japanese forces bombed Pearl Harbor in 1941.

Trump told CNN on Wednesday in reply to a question about how the ban would work that there would exceptions in cases such as diplomats and Muslim athletes, and that it might be short-lived.

“Exceptions will be made. We’re not going to say, you can’t come into the country. ... It could go quickly. It’s a subject that has to be discussed,” he said. {eo}

