

Thousands protest in Boston against immigration ban

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Thousands of people crowded Boston's Copley Square Sunday afternoon in a demonstration against Trump's immigrant ban. Although the authorities provided no official count, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), which organized the protest, estimated the attendance at 25,000. Some 19,000 had signed up for the event on Facebook.

On Saturday evening, hundreds of people had protested at Boston's Logan International Airport after at least a dozen people were pulled aside after landing and were informed that they were now subject to a "secondary process" of immigration.

The group included two University of Massachusetts Dartmouth professors, Mazdak Pourabdollah Tootkaboni and Arghavan Louhghalam, both Iranian immigrants who have lived in the United States as permanent residents for more than a decade. They had been on their way back from a weeklong sustainable engineering conference in Marseille, France.

The couple's detention, which lasted about four hours, became the basis of a challenge by lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union Massachusetts and a judge's ruling overnight that temporarily prohibits people lawfully entitled to enter the country from being detained or removed.

Iranian Alireza Ghodrati, a PhD candidate at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, was left waiting in customs at Logan airport for several hours over the weekend after returning from his father's funeral. Ghorati is a lawful permanent resident, his wife is a naturalized citizen and has lived in the US for 17 years, and their son, 10, was born in the US.

These two cases highlight the prospects for thousands of foreign faculty and students from countries targeted by Trump's order at Boston area colleges and universities, as well as people who work in the region's

IT sector and its many hospitals and medical and research facilities.

The WSWs spoke to group of students who had traveled from Brown University in Providence to attend the protest on Sunday.

Aneeqah said, "My parents are both immigrants from Pakistan, and they're American citizens now, they both have US passports. They work hard for their money; they contribute to the economy.

"We love America, this is our home and I want that for all Americans. They came here from somewhere else, right? We're all immigrants."

"I have a lot of friends from the Middle East, from Syria," Zahra said, "and I want to show them that this action [Trump's] isn't America. We're all America, all of us protesting out here. We're the ones who are standing for you and we will continue to fight. We are the majority.

"Personally, I think this is unconstitutional. The law that served a precedent for this was overruled in '65. There's no reason he should be allowed to do this. And even if he says this is temporary, 90 days is far too long. And I hope that the rest of the government, and our checks and balances, will overrule him as soon as possible."

Allison added, "I think it's pretty obvious that the root cause behind this protest is his ban, which has been critiqued as a Muslim ban, but he refuses to call it that. I think it's also important to notice the underlying issues behind all of this that I think are an even greater threat to democracy.

"Obviously, this is just unconstitutional, on the basis of religion. That we are seeing these authoritarian tendencies in our government right now, it's really important that the people are vocal and recognize this is happening, because we can't fall into just accepting

this as the new normal.

“I think there are going to be numerous threats to democracy and threats to humanity that are put into place by the Trump administration, and if we don’t remain vigilant and really try to change the underlying support system that is right now letting those actions stay in place, then it’s just going to get worse in so many different ways.”

“He’s only been president for a little over a week,” Sumaiya said. “And I think just by agreeing to this, by not showing our voice, it would be allowing it to pass, to become normal. So this protest is to show solidarity, and it’s the only way that our voices can be heard.”

Azeeza said, “As a third-generation American, this country is all I know. It’s really sad to see how some of the values this country was supposedly brought up on are being completely overturned by the new presidency here.

“But it’s really nice to see all the support coming to fruition after the completely polarizing views of this country right now.”

Anne, Eliza and Emily live in the Boston area. Anne said, “I think what’s happening right now is so indicative and reminiscent of things that happened before, and history is kind of repeating itself, and I’m trying to keep that from happening.

“I lived in Jordan for four months when I was in college,” Eliza said. “So I learned a lot about refugees in Jordan who were fleeing from Syria. I think that we need to help countries like Jordan that are taking on a huge burden of millions of refugees and they can’t do it alone. The West needs to help, so the US needs to play a part in that. We’re a much richer country than them and we can take more on than we’re doing.”

A group of Boston teachers came to the protest. Elaine said, “It doesn’t speak well for Americans. This is not what America is about, it’s not what I think we stand for in the world.”

Erin and Michael had come to the protest with her two-and-a-half-year-old daughter. Erin said, “I’m ashamed that we have to raise our kids in this situation and we have to explain to them that citizens of this incredible country voted for this administration, which is making decisions on our behalf.

“We’re all teachers, the three of us, and it’s hard for us to describe to young people why this is happening and what we can do to be supportive of one another.”



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