



Understanding and Protecting Your Travel & Free Speech Rights Under the Trump Administration

(Current March 2025)

This educational document was produced by the Council on American-Islamic Relations, America’s largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization. We present information in three sections: non-citizen guidance, U.S. citizen guidance, and digital considerations for all travelers. We also provide links to more in-depth coverage of certain topics. This document serves as an overview. It will be updated as facts evolve. Nothing in this document should be read as legal advice. Readers should consult an immigration attorney to address their specific circumstances.

Non-Citizen Guidance

I am not a U.S. citizen. Can I travel abroad?

Please consult an immigration attorney before you travel. If possible, avoid unnecessary international travel for now. Immigration attorneys taking part in a March 2025 CAIR webinar reported persistent stories of non-citizens not only being detained at the border but subjected to enhanced scrutiny and secondary inspections, with a special focus on Muslims and those engaged in activism related to Palestine.

If you have changed your status from within the U.S. and you do not have a visa stamp reflecting that updated status, now is not the time to travel home to get your updated visa stamp. Immigration attorneys also report an increase in clients who become stuck in their home countries.

But I must travel abroad.

Take precautions in advance. This includes familiarizing yourself with your rights as a traveler (see below), ensuring you have redundant means of accessing your key travel and immigration documents, having someone who is not travelling with you who knows your flight times so they can flag any unexplained delays in your travel progress, and taking precautions to secure your electronic devices in advance.

If you must travel, keep physical and electronic copies of all important travel and immigration documents—key among these are your passport and documents proving your status in the U.S.—in a secure and accessible location to ensure you have evidence of your status readily available. Be prepared for delays at the airport, additional scrutiny, and possible denial of re-entry.

Give your itinerary to someone you trust and who will not be travelling with you. Let them know your progress, “I’m on the plane” or “we just landed.” That way if you experience delays during interactions with TSA or CBP your attorney can be quickly notified. Similarly, provide electronic copies of your important travel and immigration documents to this person so they can be quickly sent to you or your attorney if needed.

If you are a non-immigrant visa holder and you are denied entry it is important to ask for the reason. There are legal differences between being refused entry, revocation of your visa, or some form of expedited removal or deportation.

If you think someone you know may have been detained, contact an immigration attorney. You can also go to the [ICE detainee locator system and possibly look them up](#).

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I am not a U.S. citizen. Is it safe for me to travel domestically?

Immigration attorneys advising CAIR are not currently reporting issues for their clients who have legal status, a valid visa, traveling within the United States. At the same time, leaving the mainland is always risky. Immigration attorneys consulted for this document included U.S. territories, Puerto Rico and Hawaii in their concerns about travel taking you outside of the mainland U.S.

Do you have any specific guidance for lawful permanent residents (LPRs)?

CAIR advises any lawful permanent residents (LPRs), also known as a “green card” holders, who are citizens of countries that may be targeted by the travel ban not to leave the United States unless it is necessary to do so. This can help ensure that you are not trapped overseas and banned from the U.S. if a ban comes into effect before your return trip. Past travel bans resulted in increased detentions and secondary inspections for green card holders.

CAIR advises that you do not sign an I-407 form, which is a voluntary abandonment of your status. Immigration attorneys taking part in CAIR March 25, 2025 webinar reported an increase in government officials pressuring, intimidating, and threatening LPRs to sign the form. LPRs are entitled to an immigration hearing in front of an immigration judge. You may be detained, but only a judge can remove your LPR status.

If you have any type of criminal record that may also change your ability to be admitted to the U.S. There is no statute of limitations on how a past criminal record may change your LPR status.

Travel with documentation proving you are a lawful permanent resident. In addition to your important travel and immigration documents this means being able to prove your continuous residence in the U.S. You can do this with a driver’s license, bank statements, utility bills, or cell phone bills. Other examples would be pay stubs or tax records.

Do you have any specific guidance for F1 non-immigrant student visa holders?

Consult with an immigration attorney. F1 students can stay beyond the validity of the face of the visa. Their status is documented on their I-20, which shows how long the student will be in school. Despite this, attorneys report clients experiencing confusion with TSA officers. [REAL ID](#) comes into effect on May 7, 2025. If you are an F1 student and the face of your visa is expired, then travel with either a REAL ID or a state issued driver’s license and ensure you have your I-20 with you. Your I-94 can also be pulled from [CBP.gov](#). It will have a D/S notation, meaning you are allowed to be in the U.S. during the entirety of your school program.

As a non-citizen what are my rights when I travel?

SEE: [Your Rights as an Airline Passenger](#)

SEE ALSO: [Your Rights While Travelling \(video\)](#)

SEE ALSO: Know Your Rights with Immigration and Customs Enforcement ([video](#)) ([pdf](#))

As a non-citizen, should I take part in activism or political dissent?

If you are not a citizen, this is the time to let your U.S. citizen colleagues step to the forefront. This advice applies particularly to students here on a visa. The government is not simply cancelling visas. Law enforcement officers are physically going to campuses looking for people. In at least one case, the person has been whisked away with their whereabouts were unknown for a period of time. The recently passed Laken Riley Act can result in your being potentially subject to mandatory detention and deportation if you are arrested. It does not require a conviction in and of itself. It could merely be an arrest for certain crimes.

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President Trump's first wave of executive orders also directed federal law enforcement to investigate immigrants already legally present in the United States based on their activism and ideological views. This directive raises serious concerns about potential political targeting, surveillance, and visa revocations for those engaged in activism or political dissent.

According to the executive order, the DOJ is authorized to take "*relevant actions or activities*" against individuals from identified countries, a broad and vague directive that could:

- Lead to increased surveillance of lawful residents, visa holders, and students.
- Result in denials of visa renewals, residency applications, and naturalization requests.
- Enable deportation proceedings against immigrants accused of holding "hostile attitudes" or engaging in "anti-American" speech.

U.S. Citizens

I am a U.S. citizen. Can I travel abroad?

Yes, but take precautions in advance to protect your rights. This includes familiarizing yourself with your rights as a traveler (see below), ensuring you have redundant means of accessing your key travel documents, having someone who is not travelling with you who knows your flight times so they can flag any unexplained delays in your travel progress, and taking precautions to secure your electronic devices in advance.

The U.S. Constitution only protects you while physically inside the U.S. When you are traveling, you do not have those rights. At a border, prior to entry to the country, you are still technically outside of the U.S. That said, you are only required to give your identification, where you are travelling from, and answer other basic, non-discriminatory questions. Be prepared to be put in secondary inspection and be prepared to be asked about your electronic devices.

As a U.S. citizen, what are my rights when I travel?

SEE: [Your Rights as an Airline Passenger](#)

SEE ALSO: [Your Rights While Travelling \(video\)](#)

As a U.S. citizen, should I participate in activism or political dissent?

"Don't shut up about the genocide. They want us to shut up about the genocide. Don't do that. That said, there are better and worse things that you can do and say and we should be strategic about it. And part of being strategic about it is knowing the different rights that you have in different situations." – CAIR Senior Litigation Attorney Gadier Abbas

Yes. Protest is an American tradition that has resulted in women getting the right to vote, ending child labor, creating the five-day work week, helping our nation exit its war with Vietnam, dismantling Jim Crow, and helping our nation end support for white supremacist apartheid in South Africa. It is never without risk. That said, the above list proves the value of engaging in this tradition.

CAIR advises parents to support their citizen children in speaking out. How free speech is in the U.S. in the coming years is being decided right now. This impacts the lives your children will live.

SEE: [Your Rights While Protesting](#)

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I am a U.S. citizen. Do I have to unlock my electronic devices for immigration officers?

U.S. citizens cannot be denied entry to the U.S. for refusing to produce passwords, provide device access, submit electronic devices for a search, or for refusing to answer questions unrelated to establishing the person's citizenship or identity. However, refusal to answer will likely cause delay. CBP may also seize your devices.

I am a lawful permanent resident. Do I have to unlock my electronic devices for immigration officers?

Lawful permanent residents who have previously been admitted to the U.S. and have maintained their status also cannot be denied entry for refusing to turn over passwords or otherwise unlock their electronic devices. LPRs only have to answer questions establishing their identity, permanent residency and other basic information about their travel, but refusal to answer additional questions will likely cause delay and further scrutiny. Do not voluntarily give up your green card or sign anything you do not understand.

I have a visa. Do I have to unlock my electronic devices for immigration officers?

Yes. Non-citizen visa holders may be denied entry for refusing to fully cooperate or answer questions.

CBP has the authority to take your devices for inspection. They can demand you turn laptops, cell phones, tablets and other devices over. You are not required to unlock these devices for them. However, they may seize your devices if you refuse.

CBP may ask you to open your device. If they open your phone, they may ask you to show it or they may plug in an AI tool that can search your phone. You are not required to unlock your phone, but if you do not, you should expect to both be detained and have the device taken from you.

What if I am mistreated?

Ask for the names and ID numbers of all persons involved in the incident. Be sure to write down this information. Write a statement of facts immediately after the incident. Be sure to include the flight number, the flight date and the name of the airline. Contact CAIR at www.cair.com/report or another civil rights if you feel you have been mistreated.

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