

Know your Rights

For Muslim travelers — **citizens, residents, and visa holders.** Stay calm. Know what to ask. Know what to refuse.

Before you travel 1

Preparation is your strongest right. A few small steps before you leave the house can protect you at the airport.

DOCUMENTS TO CARRY

- **Domestic flights:** a REAL ID-compliant ID or valid passport.
- **International flights:** a valid passport. Many countries require 6+ months of validity.
- **Non-citizens:** carry your Green Card, visa, and any relevant documents (I-94, I-20).
- **Pending immigration case:** carry a copy of your next hearing notice.

PLAN AHEAD

- Speak with an immigration attorney if you have a pending case or plan to be abroad for 6+ months.
- Memorize your attorney's number and emergency contacts — do not rely only on your phone.
- Print your flight itinerary.
- Limit sensitive data on the devices you bring.

IF YOU ARE AT RISK

If you have pending immigration status, an asylum claim, or are undocumented, talk to an attorney before any international travel. Re-entry is not guaranteed.

SCRIPTS YOU CAN USE

"I am not comfortable answering that question."

"I would like to speak with my attorney before answering."

"Am I free to leave?"

At TSA & the border 2

WHAT TSA & CBP CANNOT DO

- Target you for additional screening based on religion, race, or ethnicity.
- Question you about your worship, political views, or personal life without reasonable suspicion.
- TSA cannot handcuff you or strip-search you.

WHAT CBP CAN ASK

- Your citizenship.
- The purpose and length of your trip.
- What you are bringing into the U.S.

PAT-DOWNS & SCREENING

- Request a pat-down by a **same-gender** officer, in a **private area** if you wish.
- You may request a family member or friend be present.
- **Religious clothing:** if asked to remove a hijab, you may request a wand instead, or to remove it privately with a same-gender officer.

IF YOU ARE QUESTIONED

- **U.S. citizens** cannot be denied entry for refusing to answer questions beyond identity. Delays possible.
- **Green card holders** generally cannot be refused entry unless travel was not "brief and innocent" (USC 1101(a)(14)).
- **Visa holders** may be denied entry for refusing to cooperate. Speak with an attorney first.

DO

- ✓ Stay calm and respectful.
- ✓ Answer truthfully if you choose to answer.
- ✓ Write down officer names and badges.

DON'T

- ✗ Volunteer extra information.
- ✗ Lie or provide false documents.
- ✗ Sign anything you do not understand.

Phone & device searches 3

At the border, CBP has broad authority to inspect electronic devices — even without a warrant. The 4th Amendment applies, but is limited at ports of entry.

WHAT CBP CAN DO

- Examine your phone, laptop, or tablet.
- Physically take possession of your device.
- Detain you longer if you decline to provide a passcode.

WHAT CBP CANNOT DO

- **Force you to unlock** your device.
- Per CBP policy, access cloud-only content. Apps should be in airplane mode during inspection.*

ABOUT PASSWORDS

- **Citizens & green card holders:** refusing to share a passcode cannot be the sole basis for denying entry, but your device may be seized and you may be delayed.
- **Visa holders:** refusing may result in denial of entry. Consider this carefully.

BEFORE YOU FLY: PROTECT YOUR DEVICE

- ✓ Use a strong passcode (not Face ID or fingerprint).
- ✓ Turn on full-disk encryption.
- ✓ Log out of sensitive apps.
- ✓ Consider a separate "travel device."
- ✓ Back up your data before departure.

IF YOUR DEVICE IS TAKEN

- Ask for a property receipt.
- Write down the officer's name, badge, and agency.
- Do **NOT** remote-wipe a device in CBP custody.
- Ask that bag searches happen in front of you.

*CBP Directive 3340-049A. Verify current guidance at cbp.gov.

If your rights are violated 4

You are entitled to courteous, respectful treatment. If you believe you were treated unfairly, act quickly.

DOCUMENT EVERYTHING

Right after the incident, write down:

- Date, time, and location.
- Officer names, badge numbers, and agency (TSA, CBP, airline).
- Exactly what was said and done; any items taken.
- Flight number, date, and airline.
- Names and contact info of any witnesses.

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

"May I have your name and badge number?"

"May I speak to a supervisor?"

"Am I being singled out because of my name, religion, or national origin?"

FILE A COMPLAINT

DHS TRIP: dhs.gov/trip — for repeat screening or no-fly issues.

File with the airline directly; request a written response.

Report to CAIR Philadelphia so we can track patterns and advocate for you.

Get in touch.

Civil rights are stronger when we defend them together. If you experience discrimination or harassment while traveling, we want to know.

REPORT AN INCIDENT
pa.cair.com/report

OFFICE

1501 Cherry Street,
Philadelphia PA

EMAIL

info@philadelphia.cair.com



QR code →
pa.cair.com/report

DISCLAIMER

This guide is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Laws and agency policies change. For guidance on your specific situation, consult a qualified immigration attorney.