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Swedes blocked from meeting family

Trump's travel ban causes confusion and uncertainty amongst Swedes with dual citizenship. Swedish-Iraqi Inas Putres had planned to travel to the US with her daughter to visit her sick mother in Detroit, but she fears they will be forced to cancel the trip.

"We are conflicted, it is hard to explain to a little girl that she doesn't get to visit her grandmother," Putres said.

Trump's new regulations, which forbid people from seven predominately Muslim countries - including Iraq and Iran - to enter the country for the next 90 days, shocked the world even as far as Sweden.

The decision led to large demonstrations at several American airports and protests from Muslim countries and world leaders. A federal court in Brooklyn has temporarily directed officials not to deport people who land in the US with a valid visa, and exactly how the ban will be implemented is still a big question for airlines and passengers.

Concern over the new regulations reached as far as Sweden, where, over the weekend, SAS Airlines denied boarding to a handful of passengers on flights to the US. It is especially unclear how the regulations will affect those with dual citizenship.

Thirty-eight-year-old Inas Putres was born in Iraq but has lived in Stockholm for the past 14 years and has dual Iraqi and Swedish citizenship.

"Everything was set. I booked tickets for next week. My mother is very sick and is preparing to undergo surgery, so I wanted to be there to support and help her. Now, I don't know how things will go."

Several of Putres' family live in the Detroit area, her father and brother served as interpreters for the American army during the Iraq war. Today, her father teaches at a military language institute.

Putres has visited her family several times in the past, but this time her ESTA-application was rejected. ESTA is an automated system that determines the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Under the VWP, Swedish citizens are normally not required to obtain a visa to visit the US as tourists. However, Putres was required to seek a non-immigrant visa, presumably due to her dual-citizenship. With the new regulations, the situation is extremely uncertain.

"Those who have dual citizenship are encouraged not to travel at all, because it is a difficult situation. I have notified the travel agency who I booked the tickets through and they cannot give me advice on what to do, there are no straight answers," she said.

According to Anna Kansell at SAS media relations, it is unclear if people are being denied via ESTA because they come from one of the seven countries or if it depends on other factors, such as a problem with their passports.

"We are proceeding with business as usual. Our system communicates directly with the immigration system in the US, SAS is just a middle-man. If a person has been denied via ESTA and does not have a visa, we cannot allow them onboard. SAS is never told why a passenger is denied, that is something between the passenger and the United States," said Kansell.

Sweden's Ministry of Foreign Affairs advises all Swedes with dual citizenship who need a visa to contact the US embassy. The US embassy did not provide a statement over the weekend. Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Margot Wallström, criticized the travel ban on Facebook, posting, "the American administration needs to provide clarification regarding what this ban really means."

Inas Putres says she is considering contacting the embassy, but she does not have high expectations for a concrete resolution.

"Most likely, we will not travel. I don't want to risk ending up in a cell with my daughter. She is very upset and does not understand what is wrong with being Iraqi. I try to explain to her what is happening, but it is hard to tell a seven-year old that she can't go visit her grandma."