

# Thousands protest Trump executive order

By Meghan B. Kelly and Anne Brennan Daily News Staff

BOSTON - Thousands of people gathered at Copley Square Sunday afternoon - less than a block from the site of the Boston Marathon bombings - to protest President Donald J. Trump's executive order banning refugees, foreign nationals and migrants from seven mostly Muslim nations.

The crowd often chanted, "This is what democracy looks like," and "Stand up, fight back," as speakers whipped up the peaceful but enthusiastic gathering.

Trump's edict sowed chaos and outrage across the country beginning Saturday, as travelers were detained at airports, panicked families searched for relatives and protesters registered opposition to the sweeping measure. Federal judges from four different jurisdictions issued temporary orders blocking immigration officials from sending travelers back to their departure country.

The countries on the banned list are Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen, and includes people seeking asylum and people who have permanent resident status in the U.S. While Trump administration officials say the order is not a ban on Muslim immigrants, protesters in Boston and around the country see it as such.

The message among those at the rally was clear: A ban against people because of their religion is antithetical to what being American means.

"This is a blatant disregard for our constitution," Anne Kearney of Medfield said. "This goes against all our principles for the sake of self aggrandizement and promoting political power and it has absolutely no place in a democracy."

Kearney was there with her husband, Al. They have friends who fled Iran in the late 1970s after the Shah fell from power and the country became an Islamic Republic.

"They are productive citizens," said Al Kearney. "We love them and are worried about them."

The rally was spearheaded by the Massachusetts branch of the Council for American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). Attendees included U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey of Massachusetts and Boston Mayor Martin Walsh.

Walsh said in a tweet that the city is standing strong "to support & protect ALL of our people & we will not back down."

The executive order was signed Friday, which was also Holocaust Remembrance Day. Many in the crowd openly proclaimed their Jewish heritage and decried the executive order.

"Jews know something about this," said Leslie Belay, who held a large sign with other congregants from Temple Hillel B'nai Torah, in West Roxbury.

"As a Jew I have a particular antipathy towards people who decide to try and segregate people because of their religion, race or sexual orientation," said Amy Bernstein of Framingham. She also participated in the Women's March last week in Washington, D.C.

She has not marched or protested since the 1980s, but the actions of the new president have spurred her to make her voice heard.

"These are the things Trump said he would do when he was campaigning, and nobody believed him," she said. "Ha ha - the joke is on us."

Sunday afternoon, the White House released a statement from the president defending his policy and declaring the government will be issuing visas to all countries after 90 days.

"America is a proud nation of immigrants and we will continue to show compassion to those fleeing oppression, but we will do so while protecting our own citizens and border," read the statement.

Bilal and Kelly Janjua, of South Boston, were at the rally with Bilal's 77-year-old father, Saeed. He came to the United States in 1971 from Pakistan, and currently lives in Braintree. He and Bilal are both Muslim.

They all said they were heartened by the size of the crowd but couldn't believe they had to be there at all.

"It's pretty nuts that this is actually a thing," said Bilal.

"This country was built up from immigrants," said Saeed.

Abdallah Delumba, who is the Muslim advisor at Bentley University in Waltham and the New England coordinator for the Burma Task Force, called on the members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to state their position of this issue. It is part of our government's system of checks and balances, he said at the rally.

"I am fearing for myself and I do fear for others," said Delumba, who is originally from Uganda. He has lived in the United States for 18 years and is an American citizen.

Rep. Joseph Kennedy III, D-Brookline, was at the rally with his wife, Lauren, and their daughter Eleanor, who was bundled up in a stroller. He said he had to come out to show his support.

"I felt sick to my stomach" to hear the news of the past 36 hours, said Kennedy.

"This goes against the very fundamental values this country was built on, being a beacon of hope and peace and freedom for folks who are fleeing violent oppression."

Kennedy and his Democratic colleagues in the House are continuing to resist against the president and are trying to get Republicans to join their side.

"I think America is better than what's happening right now, it's contrary to American values" said Ted McIntyre of Franklin. "Silence is complicity. It's beyond (President) Trump, it's what are we going to be as a people."

McIntyre, a physicist who works in the high-tech industry and is a member of the Massachusetts Climate Action Network, describes himself as a "climate hawk" who supports science, protecting the environment and human rights. All these issues, he said, are linked together.

The Boston rally on Sunday was one of dozens across the country. They started Saturday at several airports, a day after Trump signed the order banning travel to the U.S. by citizens of countries on the list. The president also suspended the U.S. refugee program for four months.

A federal judge in New York issued an order Saturday temporarily blocking the government from deporting people with valid visas who arrived after Trump's travel ban took effect. But confusion remained about who could stay and who will be kept out of the country. Federal courts in Virginia, Massachusetts and Washington state took similar action.

An official with the Department of Homeland Security who briefed reporters by phone on Saturday said 109 people who were in transit on airplanes had been denied entry and 173 had not been allowed to get on their planes overseas.

No green-card holders were turned away from entering the U.S. as of Saturday, the official said, though several spent hours in detention before being allowed in.

Before Trump signed the order, more than 67,000 refugees had been approved by the federal government to enter the U.S., said Jen Smyers, refugee policy director for Church World Service. More than 6,400 had already been booked on flights, including 15 families that had been expected over the next few weeks in the Chicago area from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Iran, Syria and Uganda.

The bulk of refugees entering the U.S. are settled by religious groups. All that work ground to a halt after Trump signed the order.