

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

UNIVERSAL MUSLIM ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICA, INC. et al,

Plaintiff,

v.

DONALD TRUMP, President of the
United States, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:17-cv-00537-TSC

Declaration of Professor Lila Abu-Lughod

I, Lila Abu-Lughod, hereby declare as follows:

1. I am over the age of eighteen and competent to testify.
2. I am the Joseph L. Bottenwieser Professor of Social Science in the Department of Anthropology and the Institute for Research on Women, Gender and Sexuality at Columbia University. I have been a professor of anthropology since 1983 and taught at a number of higher education research institutions, including Williams College, Princeton University and New York University.
3. I received my undergraduate degree in Sociology and Anthropology in 1974 from Carleton College. I earned my Ph.D. in Social Anthropology from Harvard University in 1984.
4. My curriculum vitae is attached as **Exhibit 1**.
5. My research focuses, as relevant here, on three broad issues: (1) the relationship between cultural forms and power; (2) the politics of knowledge and representation; and (3) the dynamics of gender and the question of women's rights in the Middle East. I have conducted extensive ethnographic research in Egypt and elsewhere, focusing on the lived experience of women in a range of social, economic, and political circumstances.

6. I have published extensively on how Muslim women are portrayed in western society. I rely on my research and excerpts from my prior publications, including chapter 4 of *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press 2013), titled *Seductions of the "Honor Crime"* (**Exhibit 2**), and *The cross-publics of ethnography: The case of 'the Muslimwoman'* (**Exhibit 3**), in making this declaration. This book chapter and article discuss from a scholarly perspective the origins and uses of the term "honor crime."

7. I have also considered the other documents that are referenced or cited in this report.

Introduction

8. The text of the first provision of President Trump's January 27, 2017, entitled "Executive Order Protecting The Nation From Foreign Terrorist Entry Into The United States," cites the practice of "honor killings" (or "honor crimes") as justification for the exclusion of persons originating from certain Muslim-majority countries from the United States. Section 1 states that: "[T]he United States should not admit those who engage in acts of bigotry and hatred (including 'honor killings,' other forms of violence against women, or the persecution of those who practice religions different from their own)"

9. The reference to "honor killings" is repeated in section 11(iii) of President Trump's March 6, 2017, executive order of the same name. Section 11 requires the acquisition and dissemination of "information regarding the number and types of acts of gender-based violence against women, including so-called "honor killings," in the United States by foreign nationals." The executive order specifies that this information is to be gathered for the purported reason of "be[ing] more transparent with the American people."

10. These references to honor killings in both executive orders seek to justify travel restrictions by linking violence against women to the specific groups targeted by the executive

orders. My research has demonstrated that the term “honor killing,” or “honor crime,” has become a means of signaling a class of violence purportedly linked to Islam and committed by Muslim men. I have also demonstrated that invocation of “honor crimes” has become a way of stigmatizing and demeaning Islam as a faith and Muslim men as a group as uncivilized and dangerous. In this way, rhetoric about “honor killing” or “honor crime” is a means of implicitly but powerfully conjuring negative and misleading stereotypes about Islam and Muslims.

11. It bears noting here that the use of pejorative stereotypes about Muslims is not limited to the face of the two executive orders. On December 7, 2015, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump called for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States” and asserted by way of justification that Islamic law authorizes “unthinkable acts that pose great harm to . . . women.”¹

The term “honor killings” is rooted in and reflects a perjorative and misleading stereotype about Muslims

12. The terms “honor killing” and “honor crime” have been defined as “the killing of a woman by her relatives for violation of a sexual code in the name of restoring family honor.” **Exhibit 2**, at 113. These terms demarcate a culturally specific form of violence, distinct from other forms of domestic or intimate partner violence. **Exhibit 2**, at 119-20. By contrast, violence committed by men against women in the United States, while regrettably pervasive, is rarely or never characterized in terms of the culture or religion of perpetrators. *Id.*

13. In particular, my study of the use of the term “honor killing” suggests that the news stories, reports, and political positions that invoke that term almost always link such crimes

¹ Donald J. Trump, *Donald J. Trump Statement on Preventing Muslim Immigration*, DONALDJTRUMP.COM (Dec. 7, 2015), <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-statement-on-preventing-muslim-immigration>.

specifically to Islam. Other scholars who have studied the manner in which the term “honor killing” is invoked find the same assumed connection to Islam and Muslim identity.²

14. Neither Islamic law nor its religious authorities, however, uniformly or consistently condone honor crimes. **Exhibit 2**, at 114. Rather, in my experience as an anthropologist in the Middle East, I have commonly seen Islam and Islamic law explicitly invoked against gender violence. **Exhibit 2**, at 139. Moreover, there is nothing characteristically “Muslim” or “Islamic” about the observed incidence of violent and abusive behavior against women. Such reprehensible conduct is observed in Christian-majority countries, such as the United States, and in many, if not all, national contexts with equally dismaying frequency.

15. Rather than conveying an accurate implication, the term “honor killing” is a way of misleadingly categorizing violence against women as a quintessentially Muslim problem. It is therefore a way of portraying Muslim communities as deficient, backward and prone to violence. As such, the term “honor crime” is commonly invoked by individuals and groups with an anti-Muslim agenda because it reinforces the stigmatization of Muslims as violent and backward.. **Exhibit 2**, at 125; see also **Exhibit 3**, at 598. It is a rhetorical strategy “that works through fantasy to attach people to a set of values they are made to associate strictly with modernity and the West.” **Exhibit 2**, at 121.

16. In my experience as an anthropologist, working in a range of Muslim societies, and listening closely to the stories and travails of Muslim women, the idea that Islam is distinctively to blame for violence against women is false. **Exhibit 2**, at 120-21.

² See, e.g., Leti Volpp, *Blaming Culture for Bad Behavior*, 12 Yale J.L. & Human. 89, 103 (2000) (noting how media reporting characterizes “honor crimes” as related to “Muslim mores”); Juliane Hammer, *Center Stage: Gendered Islamophobia and Muslim Women*, in *Islamophobia in America* 107-44 (Carl W. Ernst, ed. 2010).

17. As I have explained in my scholarship, the portrayal of Muslim women as oppressed, socially subordinate individuals within their society serves as a way of condemning the “dangerous Muslim man.” **Exhibit 2**, at 118-20. The term “honor killing” ignores the realities and complexities of the women themselves, who face many different challenges and many forms of violence (often as a result of state action or inaction, rather than because of culture or family).

18. The term “honor killing” is often a post hoc designation that reflects the biases and assumptions of the observer rather than the facts of specific incidences of tragic violence. In Chapter 4 of *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*, I give the example of the February 2005 murder of a young woman, Hatun Sürücü, in Berlin. According to Dr. Katherine Ewing, an anthropologist and director of Columbia University’s Institute for Religion, Culture and Public Life who authored a study called *Stolen Honor: Stigmatizing Muslim Men in Berlin* (Stanford University Press 2008), based on ethnographic research on Turks in Germany, Sürücü’s tragic death led to a “media frenzy” about a “spate of honor killings” and allowed politicians to “tar the Muslim community.” Yet careful investigation of Sürücü’s life suggests other causes than a concern for “honor.” That investigation revealed the so-called “spate” of killings as a post hoc classification of murders that largely did not fit the description of “honor killings.” It also exposed public blaming of Islam that ignored the fact that the Islamic Council in Berlin roundly condemned Sürücü’s murder. In this case, Professor Ewing explains that invocation of concern about honor killings has “come to stand in for Germans’ fears of an untamed parallel society in their midst.” **Exhibit 2**, at 132-34.

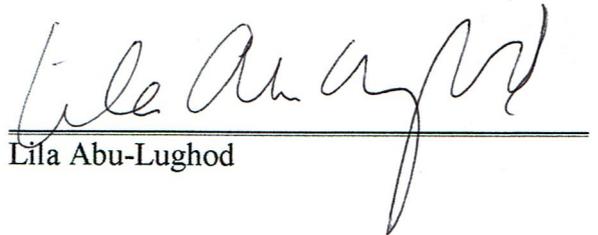
19. The invocation of the term “honor killing,” I have therefore concluded, is a way of stigmatizing Muslim (and especially Muslim men) as a backward and violent group.

20. It is therefore unsurprising that the idea of the “honor killing” or “honor crime” has been regularly invoked in national and international political debates and activities as a calculated way of putting these negative sentiments into play. In Europe, “honor crimes” are invoked in arguments about border control and the policing of immigration and immigrants by groups with anti-Muslim agendas. **Exhibit 2**, at 134. A number of scholars have noted how the stigmatization of Muslim men’s “sexual deviances” serves as a proxy to xenophobia against the group. **Exhibit 2**, at 134.

The Executive Orders show animus toward Muslims by invoking “honor killings”

21. The repeated invocation of “honor killings” in both the text of the first and the second executive order is a clear way of bringing to bear negative, false, and stigmatizing stereotypes about Muslims as backward and violent. Were any doubt to remain on this score, it would be dispelled by then-candidate Trump’s deployment of precisely the same rhetorical device about Muslim males’ violence against women on the campaign trail as justification for restrictions against immigration from predominantly Muslim countries.

DATED: April 10, 2017.


Lila Abu-Lughod