



## American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association

### **AMENA-PSY Expresses support for Iranians and Iranian Americans Affected by Recent US-Iran Tensions**

The American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association (AMENA-Psy) expresses its heartfelt condolences to the families, friends, colleagues, and loved ones of those onboard PS752. On January 8, 2020, Ukraine International Airlines flight 752 (PS752) departed from Imam Khomeini Airport in Tehran, Iran for Kiev, Ukraine. Iranian missiles struck down the plane shortly after it took flight, killing all 176 persons on board. These included nationals of Iran, Canada, Ukraine, Sweden, Afghanistan, and the United Kingdom. Many were Iranian Canadian students and academics returning to Canada after spending their winter break in Iran. We grieve for the loss of these individuals.

We strongly urge using diplomacy to achieve peace, stability, and minimize further harm or attacks.

Policies of the US government—such as enhanced surveillance of Iranian communities in the US and Executive Order 13769, popularly known as the “Muslim Ban”—have marginalized Iranian Americans. Named “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States,” the Muslim Ban has been used to bar Iranian scholars from attending and presenting their research at international academic research conferences and Iranian artists from entering the US for short-term cultural residencies. Most recently, students are being [“demeaned and humiliated”](#) at U.S. airports. Such policies have also broken up Iranian American families, causing much psychological harm. These policies have silenced and rendered invisible Iranian Americans as engaged and industrious members of the community. In fact, Iranian descent scientists, doctors, engineers, journalists, writers, scholars, and other professionals have made significant positive contributions to the United States.

The recent events, and their impact on continued media coverage, policies, and attitudes, carry a significant negative psychological impact for peoples of the Middle East. Psychological research on intergenerational trauma illustrates the sustained mental strain including stress, anxiety, fear, and as a consequence, the possibility of long-term negative health consequences. Attacks and negative attitudes towards immigrant communities also have destabilizing ripple effects, contributing to a broader and often debilitating insecurity among diverse immigrants and their families who are contributing citizens and make up the fabric of the United States.

The net effect of this experience is that Iranian Americans and other AMENA immigrants and their families are led to feel perpetually under threat. Consequently, a large group of people who are critical to the complex economic, educational, cultural, and social web of the US are continuously placed on the margins from one generation to the next. This experience is

[traumatizing](#) and leads to deleterious long-term effects such as anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses and physical ailments, as well as decreased productivity in schools and in the workplace.

As [psychologists](#) who are actively working to help heal the wounds of generations of colonialism, racism, and xenophobia, we condemn any escalation of violence and aggression on either side, and as Americans we call for the US government and US citizens to encourage their leaders to stand down from aggression — whether it be militaristic or economic in nature — and instead engage in dialogue, which decades of psychological research demonstrates, resolves conflict and promotes peace.

### **Additional resources:**

American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association. (2020). AMENA Psy home page. Retrieved from <https://www.amenapsy.org/>

Awad, G. H., Kia-Keating, M., & Amer, M. M. (2019). A model of cumulative racial–ethnic trauma among Americans of Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) descent. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 76–87. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000344>

Ayella, J. (Producer and Director). (2010). *American Coup* [Motion picture]. United Kingdom: Journeyman Pictures.

Center for Iranian Diaspora Studies. (2019). *40 stories: Life in diaspora* [Video playlist]. YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjyW8ca2i6duiK575tkcWNDyZO7wU\\_iEA](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLjyW8ca2i6duiK575tkcWNDyZO7wU_iEA)

Hampton, C. & Dickerson, C. (2020, January 25). ‘Demeaned and Humiliated’: What Happened to These Iranians at U.S. Airports.. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/25/us/iran-students-deported-border.html>