

# This Young Muslim Woman Says She Was Blocked And Deported From America Before She Could Speak At An Event Called "No Country For Young Muslim Women"

Yassmin Abdel-Magied was the winner of Queensland's Young Australian of the Year award in 2010.

by [Brad Esposito](#), [Amber Jamieson](#)

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Instagram: [@yassmin\\_a](#)



Sudanese-Australian writer, engineer, and broadcaster Yassmin Abdel-Magied was blocked at the American border after touching down at a Minneapolis airport on Wednesday.

On Twitter, Adbel-Magied said she was prevented from entering by American immigration officials who challenged the validity of her visa.

Abdel-Magied, who is Muslim, was set to speak at two events in New York City as part of Pen America's World Voices Festival. One of the events was ironically called "No Country For Young Muslim Women."

## Yassmin Abdel-Magied

[@yassmin\\_a](#)

ALSO: NYC!! Come see me at the @penworldvoices Festival. I will be at No Country for Young Muslim Women on Wednesday, April 18, and Take Back the Net on Saturday, April 21. #PENFest Tickets are still available: <https://t.co/T7XG2XfPFP>  
<https://t.co/BeCyl50bkQ>

03:25 PM - 09 Apr 2018

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Upon arriving in America on Wednesday Adbel-Magied said she had her phone taken from her and her visa canceled. She tweeted about the confrontation on Thursday morning, Australia time. On Thursday evening, Australian time, she tweeted a statement about what happened:

**Yassmin Abdel-Magied**

@yassmin\_a

Statement:

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10:40 AM - 12 Apr 2018

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PEN America CEO Suzanne Nossel called on US Customs and Border Patrol to admit her to the US in a statement on Thursday afternoon.

"We are dismayed that an invited guest to our annual [PEN World Voices Festival](#) in New York, which starts on Monday, Yassmin Abdel-Magied, herself the founder of an organization called Youth Without Borders, was turned away by US Immigration officials in Minneapolis, reportedly had her phone and passport seized, and was put back on a plane to Amsterdam," said Nossel.

"Abdel-Magied is an advocate of the rights of Muslim women and refugees and is a citizen of Australia, traveling on that country's passport."

"The very purpose of the PEN World Voices Festival, founded after 9/11 to sustain the connectedness between the U.S. and the wider world, is in jeopardy at a time when efforts at visa bans and tightened immigration restrictions [threaten to choke off](#) vital channels of

dialogue that are protected under the First Amendment right to receive and impart information through in-person cultural exchange."

Nossel said that PEN America understood Abdel-Magied was traveling on a type of visa that she had used in the past for similar trips without issue.

Target spokesperson Danielle Schumann confirmed it was supposed to host an event for the Australian, but didn't offer any further information about her visa or if she was to be paid for the event.

"Yassmin Abdel-Magied was scheduled to speak at an internal speaker series today, but unfortunately was not able to make it," said Schumann on Thursday afternoon.

Abdel-Magied [told the New York Times](#) that she was traveling on a B1/B2 visa, the same visa she'd used to speak at an event for Twitter in February.

A spokesperson for US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) said Abdel-Magied was turned away as she did not have the appropriate visa.

"During the inspection, CBP officers determined this individual did not possess the appropriate visa to receive monetary compensation for the speaking engagements she had planned during her visit to the United States," said the spokesperson.

"As such, she was deemed inadmissible to enter the United States for her visit, but was allowed to withdraw her application for admission. The traveler is eligible to reapply for a visa for future visits."

A B1/B2 visa is a combination business and tourist visa (B1 is a business visa, B2 is a tourist visa). The B1 allows its holder to "attend a scientific, educational, professional, or business convention or conference," [according to the US Department of State's site](#).

Immigration lawyer Matthew Covey confirmed to BuzzFeed News that the B1/B2 visa does not permit Abdel-Magied to speak at an event or get paid for it, because that would be providing services to a US company.

"The fact that she's said she's done this many times and it's been fine — I don't doubt that that's true, but it hasn't ever been legal. It just has worked," said Covey, the executive

director of [Tamizdat](#), a nonprofit that helps artists with US immigration issues.

He noted that writers and academics speaking at conferences and festivals on B1/B2 visas have been "largely unenforced historically," mainly because they are low-paying small events.

Covey said although there was not data on how race, religion or public profile affect whether customs officers are more likely to turn a blind eye, it's notable that the customs officers stopped Abdel-Magied, a brown Muslim woman and activist.

"Was it more likely she got singled out because of who she was? Possibly," he said, noting that middle-class white European writers had long entered the US on that visa to give speeches.

One key problem, Covey added, is that there is no clear option for people in Abdel-Magied's position. An employment visa, such as a P (for athletes, artists and entertainers) or O (extraordinary individuals) visa, costs several thousands of dollars and takes weeks to prepare, and is aimed at people who want to live in the United States.

Abdel-Magied, who lives in London, was the winner of the Queensland Young Australian of the Year in 2010. She left Australia after a barrage of media abuse and attention was focused on her following [a seven-word Facebook post](#) about ANZAC Day.

Earlier this week, Australian politicians and conservative commentators complained about [a new television program Abdel-Magied](#) was set to host about hijab fashion on the nation's public broadcaster.

Conservative Australian senator Cory Bernadi said that the ABC "needed to be reformed" after hearing about of Abdel-Magied's new show. He tweeted his support of Trump's border protection policies shortly after news of Abdel-Magied being stopped from entering broke.



**Cory Bernadi**

@corybernadi

Today I can't help but admire the border protection policies of @realDonaldTrump

09:20 AM - 12 Apr 2018

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Tweeting on Thursday morning, Abdel-Magied said that she was back on a plane only three hours after arriving in the USA.

### Yassmin Abdel-Magied

@yassmin\_a

Roughly three hours since touch down in Minneapolis, I'm on a plane back. Subhanallah. Well, guess that tightening of immigration laws business is working, despite my Australian passport. We're taking off now. What a time...

12:09 AM - 12 Apr 2018

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### Yassmin Abdel-Magied

@yassmin\_a

Oh, and they still have my passport. Apparently I can't be trusted with it until I'm in a foreign country because, as Officer Blees said, 'planes get turned away back way too often and then...'

12:12 AM - 12 Apr 2018

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Speaking to Sky News Australia, citizenship and multicultural affairs minister Alan Tudge said it was "unusual" that an Australian citizen would not be welcomed into the United States.

Australian children's book author [Mem Fox was also detained at a US airport](#) after trying to enter to speak at a keynote address for a literacy festival.