Donald Trump

Sarah Wollaston Totnes Constituency

I think the question for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is this: is Donald Trump conducive to the public good? We have heard a lot of talk in this debate about buffoonery and terms such as “blunt directness”. If I were Muslim—”I am not; I speak as a gentle atheist”I would find repulsive the thought that I should be excluded from the United States of America for no reason other than that I was a Muslim.

I am proud to represent Dartmouth. It was from Dartmouth, nearly 400 years ago, that the Pilgrim Fathers sailed to the Americas, and they sailed to escape from the kind of religious persecution that we are addressing today. We have seen in Europe what happens when an entire people are demonised for no reason other than their race, so I do not think that we should trivialise this discussion; it is a really important debate. Nor do I think that the result of the US presidential election will be decided on whether the Home Secretary decides to exclude Donald Trump. In fact, I would argue that, should Donald Trump be excluded from one of the US’s oldest allies, that would send a very clear message to the people of the United States about what we feel about those who demonise an entire people for no reason other than their religion.

I do not think that there is any realistic prospect that the Home Secretary will ban Donald Trump, but let us in this House send a very clear message to Muslims in this country, to British Muslims: we value you, we value your contribution and we will take this petition very seriously. Perhaps those arguments about religious freedom matter as much now as they did 400 years ago. I would welcome everyone across the pond in the United States who may be following this debate back to my constituency “the most beautiful constituency in Britain”to see Dartmouth, where the Pilgrim Fathers sailed from. The anniversary is in 2020.

I say this to Donald Trump. Just reflect on the consequences of your kind of religious bigotry. This is not a laughing matter. Think again, and if you do visit this country, take time to visit the mosques; take time to meet Muslims; take time to understand just how profoundly offensive and dangerous that kind of thinking is. There is no place for it in this country or in the United States.

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Does the hon. and learned Gentleman agree that the consequences of such hate speech are greater when it comes from high-profile individuals? At the heart of this debate is whether Donald Trump’s presence in the UK is conducive to the public good. We have heard repeatedly about the harm, and the hon. and learned Gentleman himself has elucidated the kinds of hate crimes about which we are talking.