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# Professor Mehdi Salehi Reflects on Drones for Refugees and The Presidential Administration's Impacts

Mehdi Salehi, a part-time Lecturer at [Parsons School of Design](#), Tishman Center Affiliated Faculty, and Tishman Center 2016 Faculty Grant Recipient reflects on his project, **Drones for Refugees**, and its importance in the new Presidential Administration.

**Q: Describe your project's evolution since receiving the Tishman Center grant. What have been some significant milestones?**

A: The Tishman Center grant supported the pilot test of *Drone for Refugees* project, deployment of the equipment and a member of the group to Lesbos Island and Athens Greece. It also facilitated visits to refugee camps in various locations as well as meeting with potential partners on the ground. The pilot test helped user testing the monitoring system and gain insight from refugees, locals, NGO members and partners for future iterations. It also helped us better understand the "hotspot" environment and the areas in which we need to improve our

system. The project attracted some media coverage and that resulted in connecting us with some universities and organizations that are interested in working with us in the future. At the moment we are working on building the live feedback platform that includes the mobile app and the website as well as fundraising for the second deployment.

**Q: Has your project changed since the US Presidential election? What are your reflections on the impacts of the executive order limiting immigration?**

A: The US Presidential election has strengthened the necessity of accomplishing the goal of the project. This country was built by immigrants and refugees with a hope for a better future and great dreams. Refugees and immigrants are forced to leave their home countries for various factors including war and persecution, climate change and natural disasters, lack of human rights, discrimination based on their

minority ethnic or religious groups and more. The executive order limiting immigration will impact the economy of the country in long term as immigrants play a big role in creating jobs and other opportunities. This ban is also against American values and constitution.



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