

Trump's election voted No. 1 religion story of 2016; Khizr & Ghazala Khan selected as top newsmakers

COLUMBIA, MO, USA, December 15, 2016 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Support of Donald Trump from white evangelical Christians in his surprise election as president of the United States was voted the No. 1 story of 2016 in the Religion News Association's annual Top 10 Religion Stories of the Year Poll.

Trump's election alarmed many on account of comments in which the President-elect vilified Muslims and illegal immigrants and in which white supremacists enthusiastically supported him. But others said they voted for the GOP candidate because of his stances against abortion and illegal immigration and in favor of gun rights and conservative judicial nominations, as well as concerns over the economy and terrorism. Support for Trump was strong among white Christians, especially evangelicals, despite disagreement among their leaders.



Religion Newsmaker of the Year honors are shared this year between Khizr and Ghazala Khan, the Muslim Gold Star parents of U.S. Army Captain Humayun Khan, who was killed in Iraq. The Khans appeared at the Democratic National Convention this July where they denounced Mr. Trump's proposed ban on Muslims entering the country as unconstitutional. President-elect Trump was runner-up in the newsmaker poll, while members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, who gained national attention while protesting a pipeline route through what they consider sacred lands, received third place.

This also marks the first time in four years that Pope Francis hasn't landed at the top of the newsmaker list. He was voted Newsmaker of the Year three consecutive years beginning in 2013.

A complete Top 10 Religion Stories of the Year list appears below, along with Newsmaker of the Year.

Religion News Association members have voted in the annual poll for nearly four decades. RNA is an [international journalism association](#) for people who write about religion in the news media. It offers training and tools to help journalists cover religion with balance, accuracy and insight.

RNA Top 10 RELIGION STORIES OF 2016

- 1) Donald Trump gets strong support from white Christians, especially evangelicals, in an upset presidential election. Many were alarmed by his vilifying Muslims and illegal immigrants and his backing from white supremacists. GOP keeps majorities in Congress.
- 2) Post-election assaults and vandalism target Muslims and other minorities. Some assailants cite Donald Trump's victory as validation. Critics denounce the appointment of Stephen Bannon as White House strategist over his ties to white supremacists.
- 3) Standing Rock Sioux members demonstrate against the Dakota Access Pipeline in North Dakota, which they say will foul water and sacred lands. Clergy and religious activists from around the country join in protests.
- 4) A busy Pope Francis urges a pastoral approach to the divorced-and-remarried in the apostolic exhortation "Amoris Laetitia." His Mass at the U.S.-Mexico border supports immigrants; he speaks of Donald Trump's proposed border wall as not Christian.
- 5) At least 4,600 migrants are killed in Mediterranean shipwrecks while fleeing conflicts, many with religious dimensions, in Africa and Asia. The ongoing crisis fuels anti-migrant, rightward political shifts in Europe, including Brexit.
- 6) Terrorists linked to, or inspired by, the Islamic State kill scores and injure hundreds at airports in Istanbul and Brussels, at German sites and in Nice, France, where a man kills 86, many of them Muslim, by driving a truck through a seaside holiday crowd.
- 7) Despite scholarly attention to "the end of white Christian America" and to growing secularism, the former provide decisive votes for Donald Trump while left-leaning religious "Nones" fail to deliver needed votes for Democrats.
- 8) #BlackLivesMatter protests continue with clergy and religious participation following high-profile shootings of African-Americans by police. Clergy also play a prominent role in uniting communities after deadly shootings of police officers.
- 9) Although white evangelicals voted Trump by a 4-1 margin, their leaders split sharply. Many evangelicals of color opposed him. Supporters cited pledges of conservative policies and court picks, opponents his alleged misconduct and racist comments.
- 10) Omar Mateen, claiming allegiance to the Islamic State, shoots and kills 49, wounds 53 at Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, Fla. Other home-grown terrorists injure dozens at a Minnesota mall, The Ohio State University and NYC-area targets of homemade bombs.

Read the headlines that ranked No. 11–25 on RNA's website.

NEWSMAKER OF THE YEAR

- Khizr and Ghazala Khan, the Muslim parents of a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq, who appeared before the Democratic National Convention as Mr. Khan denounced Donald Trump's proposed ban on Muslims entering the country as unconstitutional

The remaining newsmakers on the ballot finished in this order:

- President-elect Donald Trump, who drew strong white Christian support, stirred debate among church leaders over his character, rhetoric and lax religiosity, and alienated many Hispanic Catholics, black Protestants, Jews, Muslims and non-believers
- Members of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe, who gained national attention and support in protest of a pipeline that they say will foul their water and sacred lands
- Pope Francis, who concluded a Year of Mercy, urged pastoral care for divorced-and-remarried, defended migrants at U.S.-Mexico border, criticized Donald Trump's wallbuilding idea and held historic meetings with Lutheran and Russian Orthodox leaders
- Indiana Gov. Mike Pence — self-described as "a Christian, a conservative and a Republican, in that order" — whose nomination and election as vice-president both reflected and solidified evangelical support for Donald Trump
- Larycia Hawkins, the tenured political science professor at Wheaton College who donned a headscarf in solidarity with Muslims and then parted ways with the evangelical school after it tried to fire her for saying Muslim, Christians worship the same God
- Jerry Falwell Jr., the Liberty University president whose early endorsement of Donald Trump gave the future president a crucial boost toward gaining overwhelming support among evangelical Christians

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