

International Refugee Law Interest Group Newsletter

This biannual newsletter from the International Refugee Law Interest Group is intended to provide a summary of key developments relevant to our members. It is not meant to be a comprehensive or exhaustive report. Given the breadth and pace of activity in this area, some developments may not be included. Our goal is to highlight selected items of particular interest rather than to capture every event or update.

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Key U.S. Refugee and Asylum Policy Developments Since January 20, 2025

Introduction

Following President Donald Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2025, the U.S. government introduced a range of executive, legislative, regulatory, and judicial developments impacting refugee admissions and asylum processing. We have included various measures chronologically, with their legal sources, implementation status, and implications for individuals seeking refugee or asylum status in or outside the United States.

1. Suspension of Refugee Admissions

1.1 Executive Order on Refugee Admissions (January 20, 2025)

President Trump issued an executive order directing an indefinite suspension of the [U.S. Refugee Admissions Program \(USRAP\)](#) pending a national interest review [1]. Approximately 10,000 individuals with conditional approval for resettlement were affected.

- **Status:** Implemented; litigation pending.

- **Impact:** Delayed or canceled travel for approved refugees; created uncertainty for resettlement agencies; reduced overall refugee arrivals.

2. Presidential Proclamation on Border Asylum

2.1 Proclamation 10888 – Southern Border Asylum Ban (January 20, 2025)

The proclamation declared unauthorized border crossers ineligible to apply for asylum, effectively prohibiting asylum applications at the U.S.–Mexico border [2].

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Presidential Proclamation on Border Asylum

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- **Status:** Implemented; on July 2, 2025, a [U.S. District Court invalidated the ban](#), citing inconsistency with 8 U.S.C. § 1158. A temporary stay is in place pending appeal.

- **Impact:** Reduced asylum filings during the effective period; increased reliance on alternative migration routes; created legal uncertainty for migrants waiting in Mexico.

3. Executive Order on Border Security

3.1 “Securing Our Borders” Order (January 20, 2025)

This directive reinstated the [Migrant Protection Protocols \(MPP\)](#), ended the CBP One appointment system, and terminated parole programs for designated nationalities [3].

- **Status:** Implemented; federal court enjoined retroactive revocation of parole status for individuals admitted before January 20, 2025.

- **Impact:** Increased returns to Mexico; reduced lawful pathways; heightened dependence on litigation to determine eligibility for humanitarian parole.

4. Interior Enforcement and Family Detention

4.1 Interior Enforcement Expansion

[Executive Order 14159 “Protecting the American People Against Invasion”](#) eliminated prioritization guidelines, directing immigration authorities to pursue removal actions against all removable noncitizens. As a result, DHS expanded expedited removal authority nationwide for those with less than two years presence [4].

- **Status:** Implemented.

- **Impact:** Broadened deportation risk for asylum seekers and refugees within the U.S.; expanded the use of expedited removal.

4.2 Resumption of Family Detention (March 2025)

ICE began detaining migrant families with minor children at Karnes County, Texas, reversing policies favoring alternatives to detention [5].

- **Status:** Implemented.

- **Impact:** Increased numbers of families held in detention; raised questions about access to counsel, trauma, and effects on asylum claims.

5. Sanctuary Policies and NGO Funding Restrictions

5.1 Federal Funding Restrictions

DOJ initiated procedures to withhold or suspend federal funding to jurisdictions and NGOs limiting cooperation with immigration enforcement, pursuant to [Executive Order 14159](#) [6].

- **Status:** Implemented; legal challenges ongoing.

- **Impact:** Potential reduction of resources for municipalities and NGOs assisting refugees and asylum seekers; increased pressure on local governments.

6. Targeted Refugee Exceptions

6.1 Directive Prioritizing Afrikaner Refugees (February 2025)

A presidential order instructed agencies to develop plans for resettling Afrikaner farmers from South Africa, citing concerns about land expropriation and personal safety [7].

- **Status:** Implemented (planning phase); specific admissions pending.

- **Impact:** Established an exception to the general refugee admissions suspension; raised questions about selective refugee processing criteria.

7. Legislative Developments: Budget Reconciliation Act (July 2025)

7.1 Immigration Provisions

The FY2025 budget reconciliation bill (also known as the [One Big Beautiful Bill Act](#)) included approximately \$170 billion for immigration enforcement, expanded border infrastructure, and personnel increases. Key provisions affecting refugees and asylum seekers:

- Establishes a \$100 asylum application fee and a \$550 employment authorization card fee.
- Prohibits fee waivers regardless of applicants' financial status.
- Restricts federal benefits (e.g., Medicaid, SNAP) for refugees and asylum grantees during initial periods of stay.
- **Status:** Enacted.
- **Impact:** Creates financial obstacles for asylum applicants; alters support structures for newly arrived refugees; embeds enforcement measures into statutory law.

8. Judicial Developments

8.1 Court Rulings on Executive Actions

- **Asylum Ban Injunction** (July 2, 2025): Federal court ruled Proclamation 10888 inconsistent with statutory asylum rights; ordered restoration of asylum processing at ports of entry [8].
- **Parole Program Litigation:** Consistent with Executive Order 14165 "Securing Our Borders," DHS issued a notice declaring [the termination of the CHNV program](#). The Supreme Court granted the government's requested stay of the district court's order [9].
- **Birthright Citizenship Challenge:** Multiple district courts blocked enforcement of [Executive Order 14160](#), which sought to redefine birthright citizenship eligibility. Supreme Court limited nationwide injunctions.
- **Status:** Active litigation.
- **Impact:** Judicial decisions have constrained specific executive measures; ongoing uncertainty remains for affected populations.

Conclusion

Since January 20, 2025, U.S. refugee and asylum policy has undergone significant changes through executive orders, legislative actions, and regulatory measures. Themes include stricter humanitarian admissions, expanded enforcement authority, and new financial requirements. While courts have overturned or paused certain initiatives, many policies remain active pending final judicial outcomes. These developments collectively represent a substantial shift in U.S. refugee and asylum policy, with important implications for individuals seeking protection and for legal professionals advising these populations.

Endnotes

- 1 [Executive Order 14163: "Realigning the United States Refugee Admissions Program"](#) (Federal Register, January 20, 2025).
- 2 [Proclamation 10888: "Guaranteeing the States Protection Against Invasion"](#) (Federal Register, January 20, 2025).
- 3 [Executive Order 14165: "Securing Our Borders"](#) (Federal Register, January 20, 2025).
- 4 [Notice by Homeland Security Department, "Designating Aliens for Expedited Removal"](#) (Federal Register, January 24, 2025); [Memorandum from Benjamin C. Huffman, Acting Secretary, "Guidance Regarding How to Exercise Enforcement Discretion"](#) (DHS Memorandum, January 23, 2025).
- 5 [AILA: Trump Administration Restarts Family Detention Guaranteeing Harm and Trauma to Children and Parents](#); (AILA Press Release, March 14, 2025)
- 6 [Memorandum from Office of the Attorney General, "Sanctuary Jurisdiction Directives"](#) (February 5, 2025).
- 7 [Executive Order 14204: "Addressing Egregious Actions of the Republic of South Africa"](#) (Federal Register, February 7, 2025)
- 8 [RAICES, et. al. v. Noem, District Court Opinion](#) (July 2, 2025).
- 9 [Doe v. Trump, District Court Updates](#) (last updated July 3, 2025).