DEPARTMENT OF STATE FREEZES IMMIGRANT VISA PROCESSING FOR 75 COUNTRIES

On January 14, 2026, the Department of State announced a pause on immigrant visa processing for applicants who are nationals of the following 75 countries:

- Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burma, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, The Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Republic of the Congo, Russia, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Uruguay, Uzbekistan and Yemen.

The purpose of the pause is to allow the Department of State to conduct a full-scale review of policies and guidance in the visa process to ensure immigrants are not disproportionately relying on welfare and other social benefits after being granted admission to the United States.

The pause will be effective on January 21, 2026, and will last for an indefinite time period. Once effective, nationals from the affected countries may continue to submit visa applications, and the Department of State will continue to schedule and conduct visa interviews. However, no immigrant visas will be issued while the pause is in effect.

WHO IS AFFECTED?

The pause only pertains to immigrant visa processing with the Department of State. Nonimmigrant visas (e.g., H-1B, B-1/B-2, F-1 and TN) are not subject to the pause. Immigrant visas that have already been issued are also not affected. The only listed exception to the visa freeze are applicants retaining dual citizenship of a country that is not included among the 75 designated countries.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS

- Expect indefinite delays at the Department of State for immigrant visa applicants from the affected countries.
- Keep in mind that the immigrant visa pause is separate from the travel ban and related U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services adjudicative hold on immigration benefits that took effect January 1, 2026.

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