



IRAP Explainer on the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) Suspension

On January 20, 2025, the Trump Administration issued an [executive order](#) (EO) titled “Realigning the United States Refugee Admissions Program.” The order suspended final decisions on refugee cases and refugee entries to the United States; shortly thereafter, the Departments of State (DOS), Homeland Security (DHS), and Health and Human Services (HHS) indefinitely suspended new applications, case processing, and refugee-related funding. IRAP filed a lawsuit, [Pacito v. Trump](#), challenging the suspension. Court orders in that case currently require the government to continue processing refugees who had their travel to the U.S. arranged when the suspension was issued. In this explainer,¹ IRAP provides information on the current status of the lawsuit and USRAP processing along with an analysis of the implications of the EO.

1. What is the current status of USRAP?

Per court order, USRAP processing, admissions, and resettlement services must continue for refugee applicants who were conditionally approved and had their travel to the U.S. arranged as of January 20, 2025.

Refugee applicants who meet these criteria can contact the entity that processed their case: Follow-to-Join Refugee (FTJ-R) beneficiaries can contact the relevant DOS consular office or U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) international office;² all other refugee applicants can contact the relevant Resettlement Support Center (RSC). Based on the government’s prior statements, it is unclear when USRAP will be “restore[d] to operational status” and move forward with re-booking travel and processing. If you are aware of a government agency refusing to process a refugee applicant or FTJ-R beneficiary who was conditionally approved and had their travel to the U.S. arranged as of January 20, 2025, please contact IRAP at pacitocompliance@refugeerights.org.

Per the EO, USRAP is suspended for all other USRAP refugee and Follow-to-Join Refugee applicants who were not already conditionally approved with travel arranged as of January 20, 2025.

¹ IRAP originally published this explainer on January 22, 2025; we updated this explainer on January 28, 2025, February 14, 2025, March 12, 2025, and April 28, 2025 to reflect new developments including IRAP’s lawsuit and other updates.

² FTJ-R beneficiaries may be able to request and receive their travel documents in order to book their own travel. FTJ-R applicants who book their own travel and arrive in the U.S. should be entitled to refugee benefits. In practice, availability may vary due to the termination of resettlement agency contracts.

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2. What is the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program?

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) is a U.S. government program that facilitates the resettlement of refugees in the United States. DOS manages USRAP in coordination with DHS. DOS and DHS work with international organizations like the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and RSCs to identify, vet, and process individuals fleeing persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. DHS adjudicates refugees' applications. Approved refugees are resettled in the United States, where they receive support for integration and self-sufficiency. A number of programs are part of USRAP, such as the Welcome Corps private sponsorship program, the Central American Minors Program, and the Safe Mobility Initiative. The suspension of USRAP encompasses all of the refugee components of these programs.

3. What is the *Pacito v. Trump* lawsuit challenging the suspension of USRAP?

On February 10, 2025, IRAP, representing three national and local refugee-serving agencies and nine individuals filed [Pacito v. Trump](#), the first lawsuit challenging President Trump's EO suspending USRAP, as well as the efforts by the Trump Administration to decimate USRAP by withholding critical, Congressionally-appropriated funding for refugee processing and services. The lawsuit, filed in the Western District of Washington, asks the court to declare the EO illegal, enjoin all implementation of the EO, and restore refugee-related funding.

The court in *Pacito v. Trump* initially ordered a preliminary injunction (the "First Preliminary Injunction") at the conclusion of oral arguments on February 25, 2025 and issued a written [First Preliminary Injunction](#) on February 28, 2025. The First Preliminary Injunction enjoined the executive order and funding suspensions.

On February 26, 2025, the government issued termination notices to resettlement agencies ending funding for refugee processing abroad and services for resettled refugees and Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants in the United States. On March 24, 2025, the district court ordered a preliminary injunction (the "Second Preliminary Injunction") enjoining the government from terminating its cooperative agreements with resettlement agencies.

On March 25, 2025, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the First Preliminary Injunction must remain in effect for all refugees who were conditionally approved as of January 20, 2025, but the 9th Circuit stayed the First Preliminary Injunction in all other respects (meaning that the USRAP suspension is in effect for other applicants).

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On April 24, 2025, the 9th Circuit clarified that its ruling requires the government to continue processing, facilitation of travel, admission, and provision of refugee benefits to all individuals who were conditionally approved for resettlement and had their travel to the U.S. arranged as of January 20, 2025.

Please check [IRAP's website](#) for updates related to the lawsuit.

The questions and answers below provide information about the EO suspending USRAP. As of the date of this explainer, the court in *Pacito v. Trump* has enjoined the EO for refugees who were conditionally approved with travel arranged as of January 20, 2025. The suspension is in effect for all other refugee applicants.

4. What does it mean to suspend the entry of refugees under USRAP?

Suspending refugee entry under USRAP means the United States will not allow or facilitate the entry of approved refugees into the country as part of its resettlement program. During the suspension, no new refugees can be admitted. However, refugees who were conditionally approved with travel arranged as of January 20, 2025 are not subject to the entry suspension due to court orders in *Pacito v. Trump*.

5. What does it mean to suspend USRAP adjudications and refugee case processing?

Suspending adjudications means halting DHS's final decision-making for refugee cases in USRAP. Suspending case processing means halting other steps, including the creation of new cases, scheduling appointments, and reviewing and evaluating applications. However, refugees who were conditionally approved with travel arranged as of January 20, 2025 are not subject to the processing suspension due to court orders in *Pacito v. Trump*.

6. What does the suspension mean for people with pending USRAP cases?

Under the executive order, all pending USRAP cases, regardless of their stage, were paused for at least 90 days. Per the court orders in *Pacito v. Trump*, refugees who were interviewed, conditionally approved, and had travel arranged as of January 20, 2025 should be processed and allowed to travel.

All refugees with cases in earlier stages of processing will not see their applications move forward during the suspension. As a result, security and medical clearances may expire



during the suspension, potentially requiring applicants to repeat steps in the process. The executive order does not explicitly terminate pending cases.

7. Does the EO make exceptions to the suspension for urgent cases?

The executive order allows for case-by-case exceptions in the discretion of the Secretaries of DOS and DHS. DOS and DHS need to determine that entry is in the national interest and that the individual does not pose a threat to the security or welfare of the U.S. The government has not released any information about how to request an exception.

8. What does the suspension mean for people who want to file a new USRAP application?

During the suspension, no new referrals can be made into USRAP from UNHCR, NGOs, embassies and consulates, Welcome Corps, or direct applications.

9. Does this suspension affect Welcome Corps cases?

Yes. When implementing the suspension, the government suspended new Welcome Corps applications and processing of all pending applications.

10. Does this suspension impact refugee family reunification cases?

Yes. The suspension affects certain pathways for family reunification, including both Refugee Relative Petitions (I-730 petitions filed by resettled refugees) and the USRAP "Priority 3" family reunification pathway. As a result of the suspension, DHS has paused processing of refugee family petitions and DOS suspended processing of FTJ-R cases at U.S. consular offices around the world. Refugee applicants (including FTJ-R beneficiaries or P-3 beneficiaries) who were conditionally approved with travel arranged as of January 20, 2025 are not subject to the processing suspension due to court orders in *Pacito v. Trump*.

Processing of Asylee Relative Petitions and admissions of asylee derivative family members is not impacted by the EO.

11. Did the EO affect Afghan SIV cases?

No, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) cases are not directly affected by the executive order, but other Trump Administration actions have affected SIV applicants. The SIV program is an immigrant visa program, not a refugee resettlement program. Therefore, this order does



not affect consular processing for SIV applicants. DOS should continue to adjudicate applications, schedule interviews, and issue SIVs.

However, the Trump Administration's implementation of a different [Executive Order on "Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid"](#) has led to a suspension of flights for SIV holders, and the government's termination of cooperative agreements with resettlement agencies has impacted the availability of Reception & Placement (R&P) Services such as health and medical referrals, employment services, English classes, and more for SIV holders who arrive in the U.S after booking their own travel.

12. What is the status of departure assistance flights for Afghans in Afghanistan?

Coordinator for Afghanistan Relocation Efforts (CARE) departure assistance from Afghanistan is separate from USRAP refugee processing. The State Department has not made a public announcement, but there are [reports](#) that all departure assistance flights have been cancelled due to a lack of capacity at locations where Afghans complete processing. There have also been [reports](#) that CARE has been told to develop plans for closure.

13. Did the EO cut funding for refugees or SIV applicants who already resettled to the U.S.?

Although the EO suspending USRAP did not address funding for refugees already in the U.S., in January the Trump Administration [instructed](#) all resettlement agencies to stop work under federal grants that provide funding to resettlement agencies to provide services to resettled refugees and SIV applicants; on February 26, 2025, the State Department issued termination notices to resettlement agencies ending funding to resettled refugees and SIV applicants. As discussed in more detail above, the court in *Pacito v. Trump* has enjoined the termination of the cooperative agreements with resettlement agencies, and the government is required to continue to provide resettlement services to conditionally approved refugees who had their travel arranged as of January 20, 2025.

On March 10, 2025, in a [report](#) to the court in *Pacito v. Trump*, the government wrote that it is preparing a request for proposals "for a new resettlement agency that could provide reception and placement services for resettled refugees. The solicitation process is expected to take at least three months."

14. What does the EO say is the reason for the suspension?

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The EO claims the need to assess domestic capacity to receive refugees and reassess the security screening and vetting processes for refugees. The EO also claims the need to conduct a comprehensive review of the program to evaluate its effectiveness, efficiency, and alignment with U.S. foreign and domestic policy goals. Such a review was conducted during the first refugee ban in 2017. Much of the language in the new executive order was identical to the language used in the 2017 ban.

15. When did the EO say the USRAP would have resumed?

The EO mandates that within 90 days of its issuance, and every 90 days thereafter, the Secretary of Homeland Security, in consultation with the Secretary of State, submit a report to the President assessing whether resuming refugee admissions aligns with U.S. interests. The first report was due by April 20, 2025. The EO suspends refugee adjudications, case processing, and admissions indefinitely, until a decision is made. The implementation of the EO is currently enjoined for conditionally approved refugees with travel arranged as of January 20, 2025, but it is in effect for all other refugee applicants.