

US Department of State Indefinitely Pauses Immigrant Visa Adjudications for 75 Countries

Insights for Employers Alert | 2 min read

Jan 15, 2026

By: Ian D. Wagreich

The US Department of State has announced that it has issued a memo directing consular posts worldwide to indefinitely pause immigrant visa adjudications for nationals of 75 countries, effective **January 21, 2026**.

This sweeping measure follows a series of recent executive actions aimed at reassessing screening and vetting procedures. According to US Department of State officials, the pause is intended to prevent the entry of individuals who may pose a national security risk or who are deemed likely to become a “public charge.”

Consular officers have been instructed to refuse immigrant visas under existing law while the US Department of State conducts a comprehensive review of vetting protocols. The pause is described as “indefinite.” No timeline has been provided for when normal processing might resume.

Impacted Countries

While the official full list is still being finalized for public release, internal memos and reports indicate that 75 countries are impacted, including the following:

Americas

- Brazil
- Cuba
- Haiti
- Nicaragua
- Colombia
- Guatemala

- Jamaica

Middle East/Asia

- Iran
- Iraq
- Afghanistan
- Russia
- Thailand
- Pakistan
- Syria
- Yemen

Africa

- Nigeria
- Somalia
- Egypt
- Sudan
- Ethiopia
- DRC
- Senegal
- Ghana

Europe/Central Asia

- Russia
- Belarus
- Georgia
- Uzbekistan
- Albania
- Moldova

This list includes countries already subject to the expanded travel restrictions that took effect on January 1, 2026, but significantly broadens the scope to include major economies like Brazil and Thailand.

Next Steps to Prepare

- Although the “pause” does not mention individuals with valid non-immigrant visa stamps from the affected countries, we strongly advise nationals of the affected countries currently in the United States to postpone all international travel. If you are outside the United States and hold a valid visa, we recommend attempting to re-enter before the January 21 effective date.
- If you have an upcoming immigrant visa interview at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate in one of the affected countries, **expect your appointment to be cancelled or “placed on hold” indefinitely.**
- This pause primarily affects consular processing (outside the United States). However, it follows a January 1 USCIS memo that has already placed holds on the final adjudication of certain benefits for “high-risk” nationals within the United States. For those whose processing continues, **expect rigorous questioning regarding financial stability, health status, and “public charge” factors.**

Our immigration group is closely monitoring the situation as it evolves. **Please feel free to contact any member of our group for the latest information** or to schedule a consultation to discuss the implications of this announcement.

Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP is a U.S.-based law firm with offices nationwide. The firm’s national reputation spans the insurance industry, the financial services sector, professional services, and other highly regulated industries. Hinshaw provides holistic legal solutions—from litigation and dispute resolution, and business advisory and transactional services, to regulatory compliance—for clients of all sizes. Visit www.hinshawlaw.com for more information and follow @Hinshaw on LinkedIn and X.

Related People



Ian D. Wagreich

Partner

📞 312-704-3868

Related Capabilities

Employment Advice & Counseling

Government

Immigration

Labor & Employment

Related Insights

DHS Announces Final Rule Imposing Strict Requirements for Employers this H-1B Cap Season

Ian Wagreich Cited by Several Media Outlets Discussing a Variety of Federal Immigration Developments