

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

Insights for Employers Alert | 2 min read

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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.

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