



## **Radical Changes in U.S. Immigration Policies**

Update – June 9, 2025

This update follows our advisory of January 23, 2025, which appears at the end of this document.

The current U.S. presidential administration has now materially advanced its agenda of severely limiting immigration to and expelling undocumented migrants and some other categories of immigrants from the United States, through numerous orders, policies and directives. Of most direct potential pertinence to Eritreans, the administration has now:

- Banned otherwise lawful travel by Eritreans (among other nationals) into the U.S.; that is, stopped issuing new visas for student, tourist and business travel, including travel by U.S. citizens' families.
- Undertaken to enhance detection and deportation of those who over-stay their existing visas.
- Closed the U.S.'s southern border with Mexico as a route for entry by asylum seekers.
- Conducted roundups of migrants and immigrants, including when they have been attending immigration court hearings or scheduled visits with immigration authorities.
- Deported (or attempted to deport) failed asylum seekers to inhospitable countries such as South Sudan, Libya and Panama, as punishment and as a deterrent for others who may seek asylum here.
- Deported migrants without due legal process (e.g., full immigration court hearings and decisions), sometimes in defiance of court rulings – including rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Allowed federal agents to issue to migrants unenforceable administrative warrants – e.g., arrest warrants and search warrants issued by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) or Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) – rather than enforceable warrants formally issued by courts, seemingly with a view to misleading or intimidating the migrants into complying with the unenforceable warrants.
- Deported holders of visas and green cards if they commit crimes here.
- Imposed enormous fines on migrants who have received deportation orders but have not yet left the country.
- Threatened and defunded law firms and non-profit organizations that provide pro bono legal and/or social services to migrants and immigrants.
- Searched for undocumented migrants by examining their census, tax and employment records.

- Proposed to tax remittances sent from the U.S. to migrants' and immigrants' family members overseas, reportedly so as to deter future migration and to encourage self-deportation.
- Declared an end to birthright citizenship – the right of a child born on U.S. soil to automatically be a U.S. citizen, as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.
- Suspended essentially all refugee admissions, even for those refugees whose admission from overseas locations had already passed all United Nations and State Department approval processes.

Other recent administration actions directed against immigrants and foreigners have included investigating and arresting foreign students at American universities and barring them from attending; terminating and shortening humanitarian parole and Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for many foreign nationalities; suing and threatening to defund sanctuary cities – those that don't completely cooperate with federal deportation authorities; and deploying federal troops to quell anti-deportation protests in violation of federal law and precedent.

Many of the above actions have been appealed in court; but those appeals may or may not succeed. In any event, The America Team cautions current and potential Eritrean asylees, asylum seekers and green card holders, as well as Eritrean American citizens – and the families of all of them – about all of those matters.

### **If Government Immigration Agents Approach You**

The America Team urges all migrants, immigrants and others to obey American laws. However, we also wish to inform migrants and immigrants of some of their rights and potential strategies under American law. (The following advice is drawn largely from a *Washington Post* column dated May 19, 2025: <https://eritreanrefugees.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/WASHINGTON-POST-5-19-25.pdf>)

- If a person is approached by government agents, the individual has the right to remain silent and to be represented by a lawyer. The individual should avoid signing anything or agreeing to be searched. The individual should ask for the names and badge numbers of the government agents. But the individual should not physically fight with or obstruct the agents.
- If a person is approached by a government agent in the street, the individual should ask if he or she is free to leave; and if yes, he or she may simply walk away. If approached at home, the individual does not need to allow the government agent into the home.  
Exception: If the agent has an arrest warrant or a search warrant signed by a judge of a court that names the specific individual, that individual must comply with the warrant. But a warrant issued by a government agency such as DHS (the Department of Homeland Security) or ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) need not be obeyed.
- Individuals approached by government agents should carefully remember exactly what has happened and what has been said. They may also wish to take videos of the encounter, unless the agents forbid them from doing so.

- Migrants and immigrants should carry with them at all times photocopies of pertinent legal documents, such as their U.S. passports, drivers' licenses, visas, green cards, asylum applications and scheduled immigration court appointments.
- Migrants and immigrants should have a plan prepared should they be arrested, including how to contact a lawyer, family members and close friends. Family members and close friends should also be prepared with this plan, but they should be careful to not become targets themselves.

Update – January 23, 2025

On November 5, 2024, Donald J. Trump was elected President of the United States for a four-year term, and he was inaugurated on January 20, 2025. Within the first few days after his inauguration, he announced radical changes in U.S. immigration policies and directives. Among other things, he announced the closing of America's southern border with Mexico to asylum seekers; the suspension of all refugee admissions; the removal of top career immigration officials; his intention that federal agents will enter previously safe churches and schools to apprehend undocumented migrants for deportation; his intention to prosecute local government officials who don't cooperate with his policies; and his undertaking to eliminate birthright citizenship -- that is, the automatic citizenship granted any child born on American soil, which is currently guaranteed under the U.S. Constitution.

Pro-immigration advocates are likely to contest some of those orders and undertakings. Some, such as the elimination of birthright citizenship -- may be inherently difficult for Mr. Trump to achieve. But regardless of the outcomes, America has become far less hospitable to refugees and asylum seekers than it has been for a century. We now caution Eritreans who have escaped their country's brutal regime that they may have far greater obstacles than before in seeking asylum or refuge in the U.S.

Mr. Trump had previously been elected president in November 2016 and had served a four-year term, which had ended in 2021. In his first term as well, he had imposed severe restrictions on asylum opportunities and refugee admissions. But in his second term, the restrictions are expected to be broader, deeper, and more effectively implemented.

In addition to his anti-immigration promises and policies, in his second campaign for the presidency and since being elected and taking office for the second time, Mr. Trump for the most part has not indicated an interest in advancing international human rights -- an area in which the U.S. government has often strongly advocated since the end of World War II. Accordingly, it seems likely that the new Trump administration will pay less attention to advancing human rights in Eritrea and elsewhere in the Horn of Africa than the U.S. government has done in the past.

The America Team for Displaced Eritreans will attempt to update this notice from time to time.