CYRUS D. MEHTA & PARTNERS PLLC
US IMMIGRATION & NATIONALITY LAW

# IMMIGRATION UPDATE - DECEMBER 22, 2025

*Posted on December 22, 2025 by Cyrus Mehta*

Headlines:

**President Expands Full and Partial Travel Ban List** – President Trump issued a Presidential Proclamation expanding travel restrictions. The new proclamation applies to individuals who are outside of the United States as of January 1, 2026, and do not have a valid visa.

**President Suspends Diversity Visa Program After Shootings** –President Trump suspended the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program (green card lottery) following shootings at Brown University and of a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor by a Portuguese national who immigrated to the United States in 2017 under that program.

**USCIS Clarifies Requirements for Professional Athletes as World Cup and Olympics Events Loom** – As the United States prepares for upcoming World Cup and Olympics events in 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced new policy guidance to address the Department of Labor's adoption of the Foreign Labor Application Gateway system and its effect on certain immigrant visa petitions filed on behalf of professional athletes.

**Firm in the News**

Details:

## President Expands Full and Partial Travel Ban List

On December 16, 2025, President Trump issued a Presidential Proclamation expanding travel restrictions announced earlier this year. The new proclamation applies to individuals who are outside of the United States as of January 1, 2026, and do not have a valid visa. Below are highlights.

**Full Ban**

Added to the original list of countries named in the earlier ban (Afghanistan, Burma, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen) are the new countries under the "full" ban (Burkina Faso, Laos, Mali, Niger, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Syria) and individuals holding Palestinian Authority-issued or endorsed travel documents.

**Partial Restrictions**

The proclamation also continues "partial" restrictions for immigrants (green card applicants) and nonimmigrants (temporary visa applicants) in the visitor/tourist category (B-1, B-2, B-1/B-2), student categories (F and M), and exchange visitor category (J) for several countries (Burundi, Cuba, Togo, Venezuela, and Turkmenistan (nonimmigrant Turkmenistan nationals on B-1, B-2, B-1/B-2, F, M, and J visas no longer face any travel restrictions, but entry to the United States of Turkmenistan nationals as immigrants remains suspended).

New countries with "partial" restrictions (suspension of entry into the United States of immigrants and nonimmigrants in the B-1, B-2, B-1/B-2, F, M, and J classifications) include Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominica, Gabon, The Gambia, Malawi, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, Tonga, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

**Both Full and Partial**

Countries on both the "full" and "partial" suspension lists will be periodically reviewed every 180 days under the terms of the Proclamation to determine if any of the suspensions or limitations imposed should be continued, terminated, modified, or supplemented. Employers sponsoring individuals from these countries, and visa applicants from these countries, should closely monitor changes in federal immigration policy that may allow for future changes to their U.S. visa and entry eligibility.

**Exceptions**

Significant exceptions to these travel restrictions include:

1. Lawful permanent residents of the United States (existing green card holders);
2. Existing nonimmigrant (temporary) visa holders;
3. Dual nationals of a designated country traveling on a passport of a non-

designated country (for example, a dual national of the United Kingdom and Chad may be able to travel using their UK passport);
4. Diplomats holding A/G/NATO visas;
5. Athletes or members of an athletic team (including coaches and immediate relatives) traveling for the World Cup, Olympics, or other major sporting events designated by the Secretary of State;
6. Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders (no longer including Afghan SIV holders);
7. Ethnic and religious minorities in Iran;
8. Individuals granted asylum;
9. Individuals whose entry is determined to be in the national interest involving the Department of Justice as determined by the Attorney General;
10. Individuals whose entry serves the U.S. national interest as determined by the Secretary of State; and
11. Individuals whose entry is determined to be in the national interest involving the Secretary of Homeland Security.

As noted above, the proclamation no longer includes exceptions for Afghans who qualify for the SIV program. Additionally, the proclamation removes exceptions previously in the June travel ban for individuals with family-based immigrant visas and adoption visas. National Interest Exceptions may also be possible, although the Department of State has not released an implementation policy.

Practitioners advise those affected by this proclamation who are presently outside of the United States to consider making plans to return immediately. See also the related White House fact sheet.

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## President Suspends Diversity Visa Program After Shootings

On December 18, 2025, President Trump suspended the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program, sometimes called the "green card lottery," following shootings at Brown University and of a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor by a Portuguese national who immigrated to the United States in 2017 under that program and obtained legal permanent residence (previously, he had been in the United States on a student visa but left school).

"At President Trump's direction, I am immediately directing to pause the DV1 program to ensure no more Americans are harmed by this disastrous program," Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem said in a post on X.

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## USCIS Clarifies Requirements for Professional Athletes as World Cup and Olympics Events Loom

On December 18, 2025, as the United States prepares for upcoming World Cup and Olympics events in 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced new policy guidance to address the Department of Labor's (DOL) adoption of the Foreign Labor Application Gateway (FLAG) system and its effect on certain immigrant visa petitions filed on behalf of professional athletes.

The guidance:

- Provides an overview of the FLAG system and describes the new labor certification-related documentation that must be submitted with the Form I-140 (Immigrant Petition for Alien Workers);
- Explains that labor certifications for professional athletes that were filed using the FLAG system no longer contain the minimum job requirements for the offered position; and
- Clarifies that if an immigrant petition for a professional athlete contains a labor certification obtained through the FLAG system, USCIS may issue a request for evidence to obtain the minimum job requirements if that information is not contained in the supporting documentation submitted with the Form I-140.

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## Firm in the News

**Cyrus Mehta** was quoted by the *Times of India* in 'Fits the Pattern': Former Immigration Official Says Trump Could Permanently End Green Card Program as Lottery Stops. The article quoted Mr. Mehta's "X" post: "One person's bad actions should not be used to shut down the entire Diversity Visa program that is mandated by Congress. The Brown University shootings were not as a result of the visa program but based on the motivations of an individual. The President has in the past unfortunately attacked the DV program because it

brings people from 'shithole' countries to the U.S. The alleged killer in this case is from Portugal, which hardly qualifies from among the countries that Trump has denigrated. The administration should not be using these unfortunate killings as a pretext to shut down immigration programs it disfavors."

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