



IMMIGRATION UPDATE - JANUARY 22, 2026

Posted on January 22, 2026 by Cyrus Mehta

Headlines:

[DOS Announces Temporary Pause on Certain Visas for Nationals of 75 Countries](#)

– The Department of State announced a temporary pause on the issuance of immigrant visas (green cards from overseas) for nationals of 75 countries, effective January 21, 2026.

[DHS Terminates TPS Designation for Somalia](#) – The Department of Homeland Security is terminating Somalia's Temporary Protected Status designation, effective March 17, 2026.

[DHS Reduces Wait Times for Certain Religious Workers Abroad](#) – The Department of Homeland Security has issued an interim final rule, effective immediately, to eliminate the one-year foreign residence requirement and allow thousands of religious workers in R-1 status, who previously were required to remain outside the United States before returning, to resume their essential services.

[Harvard Hits High for Foreign Student Enrollment Despite Battles With Trump Administration](#) – Harvard University's international student enrollment hit a high of 6,749 students in the fall of 2025, which is nearly 28 percent of the total number of students studying at Harvard and is the highest recorded share since at least 2002. The increase is due at least partly to graduate student enrollment; undergraduate international student enrollment nationwide declined in the fall 2025 term.

Details:

DOS Announces Temporary Pause on Certain Visas for Nationals of 75 Countries

On January 14, 2026, the Department of State (DOS) [announced](#) a temporary

[pause](#) on the issuance of immigrant visas (green cards from overseas) for nationals of 75 countries, effective January 21, 2026. DOS said this pause is for the government to review how immigrant visa applicants are evaluated under the "public charge" rules. In announcing this review, the government has indicated it wants stricter standards to prevent new immigrants from receiving any public support.

This policy applies only to immigrant visas (green card processing through a U.S. embassy or consulate) for applicants who are:

- Nationals of one of the 75 countries identified by DOS, and
- Applying for an immigrant visa abroad (not adjustment of status in the United States).

The affected countries include Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burma, Cambodia, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominica, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, The Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kuwait, Kyrgyz Republic, Laos, Lebanon, Liberia, Libya, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Nepal, Nicaragua, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Republic of the Congo, Russia, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, and Yemen.

Applicants from these countries may attend their visa interviews, but their immigrant visas will not be issued for the time being, unless a limited exception applies. A dual national applying with a valid passport of a country that is not listed above is exempt from this pause. No immigrant visas have been revoked as part of this guidance.

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DHS Terminates TPS Designation for Somalia

On January 13, 2026, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [announced](#) that it is [terminating Somalia's Temporary Protected Status \(TPS\) designation](#), effective March 17, 2026.

DHS said it has automatically extended the validity of certain Employment Authorization Documents (EADs) previously issued under the TPS designation of Somalia through March 17, 2026. As proof of continued work authorization through March 17, 2026, Somali TPS beneficiaries can show their EADs that have the notation A-12 or C-19 under Category and a "Card Expires" date of March 17, 2023, September 17, 2024, or March 17, 2026.

DHS said that Somali nationals who do not have a legal status other than TPS that would allow them to remain in the United States should use U.S. Customs and Border Protection's [CBP Home mobile app](#) to report their departure from the United States. The app includes a complimentary plane ticket, a \$1,000 exit bonus, and "the opportunity for potential future legal immigration," DHS said.

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DHS Reduces Wait Times for Certain Religious Workers Abroad

On January 14, 2026, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [announced](#) that it has issued an [interim final rule](#), effective immediately, to eliminate the one-year foreign residence requirement and allow thousands of religious workers in R-1 status, who had reached their maximum period of stay in the United States and were required to remain outside the United States before returning, to resume providing their services to "U.S. churches, mosques, synagogues, and other bona fide nonprofit religious organizations."

DHS said the rule "significantly reduces this wait time, providing stability and minimizing disruptions for faith-based communities." The agency said that the purpose of this change "is to promote stability and minimize disruptions to the vital services that R-1 religious workers provide to U.S. churches, mosques, synagogues, and other bona fide nonprofit religious organizations."

The rule removes the requirement that R-1 religious workers reside outside the United States for one year when they reach the statutory five-year maximum period of stay. While R-1 religious workers are still required to depart the United States, the rule establishes that there is no longer a minimum period of time during which they must reside and be physically present outside the United States before seeking readmission in R-1 status.

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Harvard Hits High for Foreign Student Enrollment Despite Battles With Trump Administration

According to [reports](#), Harvard University's international student enrollment hit a high of 6,749 students in the fall of 2025, which is nearly 28 percent of the total number of students studying at Harvard and is the [highest recorded share](#) since at least 2002. The increase is due at least partly to graduate student enrollment; undergraduate international student enrollment has been declining. This was despite the university's [battles](#) with the Trump administration over funding cuts and vetting and admission of foreign students.

According to [Bloomberg Law](#), foreign graduate student enrollment at U.S. universities declined by 1.4% in the fall 2025 term. The number of foreign students across the U.S. dropped by close to 5,000 even as the overall number of students grew by 1%, according to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. Harvard's share of students from India (545) dropped by about [31 percent](#) in the fall of 2025. The largest group of international students at Harvard are [Chinese](#).