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Federal court strikes down a slew of immigration restrictions impacting 39 countries

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The US District Court for the District of Rhode Island on Friday **ruled** that the Trump administration had enacted illegal immigration restrictions on citizens of 39 countries. In vacating the restrictions, Judge John McConnell wrote that the concerned immigrants have been stuck in limbo despite their compliance with immigration laws. Applicants waited for months without decisions on requests for asylum, work permits, permanent residencies, and citizenship, while the government refused to act.

President Donald Trump issued the restrictions in his **presidential proclamation** "Restricting and Limiting the Entry of Foreign Nationals to Protect the Security of the United States" in December. The order increased restrictions and suspended entry for a list of mostly African nations. The list also includes Afghanistan, Palestine, Haiti, Cuba and Venezuela. **US**

Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a branch of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), administers the regulations.

The restrictions came a month after Rahmanullah Lakanwal, an Afghan national, opened fire on two National Guard members in Washington DC, killing one and injuring another. The case is yet to be tried. After the attack, Trump **said** that he would “permanently pause migration from all Third World Countries to allow the US system to fully recover,” and expanded the number of countries subject to full or partial travel bans. The administration also **responded** by announcing the suspension of asylum applications.

A coalition of immigrants’ rights groups challenged the new restrictions in March. The **complaint** accused the Trump administration of violating **Fifth Amendment** guarantees of **due process** and **equal protection**. The complaint also alleged that the new immigration measures put in place by USCIS violated the **Administrative Procedure Act** because they were arbitrary and capricious, and exceeded the statutory authority conferred by the **Immigration and Nationality Act**.

Democracy Forward advocacy group president Skye Perryman stated that the “unlawful policies caused enormous harm to families, workers, asylum seekers, and communities across the country who were left in limbo, unable to work, access protections, or move forward with their lives.”

In ruling against the administration, Judge McConnell wrote:

The Court is reminded of a line often repeated in discussions around immigration policy: If people wish to immigrate to the United States, they ought to “follow the law” and “do things the right way.” This case serves as a perfect example of immigrants doing just that... Even so, Plaintiffs and their [family] members are stuck waiting... USCIS’s hold on adjudications cannot be attributed to anything that these individuals did wrong; rather, it arises solely by the happenstance of their birth.