



[Inauguration of Trump as 47th U.S. President and His First Foreign Policy-Related Executive Orders](#)

This past Monday, January 20th, Donald Trump was sworn in as the 47th President of the United States. After his inauguration, Trump signed an array of executive orders upon his return to the White House, which of course included actions that will have significant U.S. foreign policy implications. Among others of note, these consisted of executive orders to: withdraw the United States from the Paris climate accords and the World Health Organization (WHO), lift sanctions against violent Israeli settlers, rename the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of America, temporarily suspend all U.S. foreign assistance programs for 90 days pending reviews to determine whether they are aligned with “Trump policy goals,” and declare a national energy emergency to open up resource extraction. Trump also issued an executive order aimed at restricting visa-seekers and refugees from certain countries that the administration deems as ones with “identified security risks,” with the Department of Homeland Security due to report back within three months regarding whether or not resuming these refugee entries would be “in the interests of the United States.” This has elicited understandable concern from rights advocates, as some have pointed out that it undermines the United States’ role as a longstanding safe haven for asylum seekers fleeing persecution and repression. All told, many of President Trump’s first actions appear to be aligned with his proclaimed protectionist and isolationist foreign policy approach, and experts also anticipate a degree of unpredictability to it as well.

One of the most alarming foreign policy-related executive orders signed by President Trump shortly after his inauguration was the lifting of sanctions previously imposed by the Biden administration on more than 30 extremist Israeli settler groups and entities. While Israeli settler violence against Palestinians has been a reprehensible reality for decades, it has surged in recent years – particularly since the onset of the Gaza War back in October of 2023. With much of the world’s attention fixated on the heinous war crimes and human rights violations taking place in Gaza, concurrently, extremist Israeli settler violence in the illegally-occupied West Bank has been on the rise. As human rights groups often seek to draw attention to, this is routinely enabled and even aided by Israeli forces themselves. Thus, the fact that President Trump is removing these sanctions rather than conversely doubling down or adding to them in an effort to stamp out the behavior is very problematic and harmful. It ultimately damages the United States’ standing and credibility as a defender of human rights on the global stage, and runs counter to the values and principles that the country espouses to uphold.

During his first day back in office, President Trump also issued an executive order withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization (WHO), in addition to another which will pull the U.S. out of the Paris climate accords yet again. First, with regards to the WHO, various issue experts were quick to say that the move leaves the United States and other countries less safe from protection against infectious diseases and public-health threats. They argue that having the robust coordination of governments around the world, which would of course include a major global actor like the United States, is critical to efforts to combat public health crises. There is also the important matter of access to constantly evolving health-related information, guidance, and developments, something that the U.S. would lose should it end up withdrawing from the WHO. As such, this would make the United States increasingly vulnerable to public health threats from across the globe, and expand the likelihood that disease outbreaks become more widespread.

As for Trump's decision to again pull the United States out of the Paris climate accords, to observers this illustrates the initiation of an aggressive agenda to roll back climate change policies and commitments to tackle the issue, while bolstering fossil fuel extraction and production. It also hinders the world's ability to strive towards achieving set climate change objectives, and in doing so, risks further accelerating the impacts of global warming. Additionally, the withdrawal could negatively affect the United States by giving China and other economic competitors an advantage in gaining a foothold on the clean energy manufacturing market. As one commentator tried to outline, the United States should continue to show leadership on the international stage if it wants to have any say in how trillions of dollars in financial investments, policies, and decisions are made regarding climate change. In his first term, President Trump withdrew from the Paris accords, but Former President Biden rejoined them after winning the White House in 2020.

In addition to his immediate executive orders earlier this week, President Trump also recently re-designated the Houthis in Yemen as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO). What is of most concern regarding this move, is the fact that it will exacerbate the already dire humanitarian conditions in the country. Under Biden back in January of last year, the Houthis had been labeled with a less severe designation, but now, Trump's decision to reinstitute them as an FTO presents an obstacle to aid groups working in Yemen. The FTO designation means that anyone in the United States or abroad suspected of providing resources to the Houthis could be prosecuted under U.S. law. Due to this, in the past, human rights organizations had warned against the label, citing how it could prevent aid groups from operating in areas that are under Houthi control – which is where much of Yemen's population lives. As rights advocates have been quick to point out, actions like this hurt the wrong people. While the Houthi leadership is largely insulated from shortages in food and other essential supplies, many Yemeni civilians are not and will be the ones to unfortunately suffer the largest negative consequences, especially those that depend on outside humanitarian aid to survive.