



[The Attack Against National Guard Members and Its Impact on Asylum Seekers](#)

Last week's heinous attack against two National Guard members in Washington D.C. near the White House has raised concern regarding the negative impact it will have on those seeking asylum in the United States. The assault, carried out by an individual who moved to the United States from Afghanistan several years ago under a program that offered special immigration protections for those who had worked with U.S. forces in the latter country, has prompted the Trump administration to implement a wide range of strict immigration restrictions – including an indefinite halt to all asylum decisions. Regrettably, this reaction to the attack is due to have a significant and detrimental effect on blameless asylum seekers of all nationalities, especially those from Afghanistan, due to the profile of the assailant. Human rights advocates have criticized the sweeping response to the incident, pointing out that they amount to a form of unjust collective punishment for the actions of one mere individual.

The pause regarding asylum decisions creates immense uncertainty for hundreds of thousands of people fleeing persecution, many of whom have already been waiting years for their cases to be adjudicated due to existing backlogs. Unfortunately, some of the most immediate negative impact is on Afghans who risked their lives to support U.S. forces and are now stranded in dangerous circumstances or in legal limbo within the United States while seeking permanent resident status or reunification with their families. The recent Trump administration actions on asylum and immigration following the incident have halted application processing, cancelled appointments, and placed large numbers of inculpable individuals with pending cases or existing status in uncertain situations. The changes are poised to potentially upend the status of as many as 2.2 million people with pending asylum cases within the United States.

It is estimated that approximately 50,000 people who gained asylum under the previous Biden administration could now have their status reviewed or threatened. Additionally, more than 230,000 refugees who entered the United States between January of 2021 and February of 2025 are subject to a review of their status, while the processing of their applications for permanent residence has been halted too. Furthermore, the Trump administration has summarily stripped Temporary Protected Status (TPS) from nearly 1 million people and revoked hundreds of thousands of grants of humanitarian parole, placing these individuals at risk of deportation. The administration also ordered a "full-scale, rigorous reexamination" of all green cards for individuals from 19 countries classified as "high-risk." This affects several million

people, including large populations from nations like Iran, Somalia, Haiti, Afghanistan, Libya, Sudan, Yemen, Venezuela, and Cuba – many of whom have lived legally in the United States for years. These individuals face the prospect of arbitrary revocation of legal status, something that would make them targets for deportation without any evidence of wrongdoing. The overall impact of these policy changes has included the indefinite suspension of asylum decisions as well – a troubling development given the often times urgent and pressing circumstances surrounding these cases.

Human rights advocates have highlighted that the Trump administration's measures in the aftermath of last week's attack are unwarranted and use the tragedy as a pretext to smear and target a large group of already vulnerable people. Many of those negatively impacted are fleeing persecution and violence, and have undergone rigorous levels of vetting during their process of seeking asylum in the United States. The isolated actions of one individual should not define or disparage an entire community, and it is wrong to try and undermine legal pathways for the overwhelming majority of asylum seekers who are simply seeking safety and a better life. Halting dire asylum decisions and expanding expedited removals without a court hearing deprives individuals of their right to apply for humanitarian protection and due process. The measures taken by the Trump administration are seen as a form of weaponizing the immigration system for political means, using inflammatory language against immigrants to stoke fear and scapegoat. Ultimately, the response to what was a single criminal attack was disproportionately broad and is likely to now have far-reaching negative ramifications on those who deserve no culpability whatsoever for the assailant's actions.