

Refugee Policy Landscape

Key Developments, Themes, and What Comes Next



Danilo Zak, Director of Policy at  **CWS**

What we'll cover today...

- Context when Trump took office
- Key policy developments impacting refugees and humanitarian entrants
- What about Congress and the Courts?
- How CWS is responding
- What's next?

Context when Trump took office

- Record number of immigrants in “limbo” statuses like parole, TPS, DACA
- Strongest refugee program in 30 years
- Welcoming infrastructure under construction

Record number in “limbo”

Program	Number of Beneficiaries
TOTAL	1,873,000
Temporary Protected Status (TPS)	611,000
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)	579,000
Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan, and Venezuelan Parole Program	168,000
Uniting for Ukraine	141,000
Processed via CBP One App	140,000
Deferred Action: Special Immigrant Juvenile Status	80,000
Deferred Action: U Visa	78,000
Operation Allies Welcome	76,000

Source: [Migration Policy Institute](#)

Key Policy Developments

1. Limiting humanitarian pathways – Indefinite refugee and asylum bans
2. Not just dismantling but *corrupting* refugee resettlement
3. Attacks on benefits and supports
4. Increasingly indiscriminate ICE actions

Attacks on Refugee Resettlement

- *Stranded overseas:* January 20 indefinite refugee ban leaves over 100,000 refugees who had been conditionally approved for refugee status left waiting in limbo
- *Targeted in their new homes:* Passage of so-called One Big Beautiful Bill Act cuts refugees and others off from food assistance, dramatically ramps up ICE enforcement
- *Who is being resettled?* The administration has prioritized white South Africans with dubious claims to refugee status through the program.

Restrictions on humanitarian entrants

- Revocations of humanitarian parole and TPS
- Green card holders, students, refugees, tourists, unaccompanied children, even U.S. citizens have been caught up in enforcement actions
- Ongoing asylum ban and severe restrictions to due process
- Afghan SIV program still alive, but in need of advocacy

Over 90% of individuals served by resettlement agencies like CWS since January 2025 have been Afghan SIVs

Two-Pronged Attack on Refugee Resettlement

- Draft PD sets refugee admissions target at historic low of 7,500
- Majority of slots reserved for Afrikaners, stranding tens of thousands who have been waiting for years in the pipeline
- Reporting suggests the administration is considering to go further, bringing in far-right activists from Europe and cancelling the existing pipeline.

CWS Action Alert: [Stand with Stranded Refugees as Trump Plans Historically Low Refugee Admissions Ceiling](#)

Attacks on benefits

- Stripping federal support to refugees when they need it most
- States across the country beginning to roll out cuts to SNAP. But confusion remains around eligibility.
- State governments uniquely positioned to invest in programs that prevent refugee communities from going hungry

CWS Action Alert: [Tell Your State Elected Officials to Stand with Refugees in the Wake of SNAP Cuts](#)

How CWS is Responding

- Continuing to serve and stand by those in need
 - 12,000 currently being served
 - 2 million Office of Refugee Resettlement eligible individuals in the U.S.
- Weighing what it means to stay in a program whose integrity has been undermined
- Speaking up and advocating against the attacks on our communities

Action in the courts

- Over 100 lawsuits, including those challenging the refugee ban, the funding freezes, the stop work orders, the asylum bans, the attacks on parole, the invocation of the Alien Enemies Act.
- *Pacito v. Trump* as a microcosm for how these suits have gone – and how the administration has failed to abide by legal obligations
- Change comes through effective litigation combined with sustained mobilization and advocacy



Advocates gather outside Seattle courthouse

What Comes Next

- Preparing for further restrictions, continued targeting of welcoming organizations and communities
- Key questions
 - *What role will Congress and the courts play?*
 - *Can we maintain welcoming infrastructure and ethos with state, local, and community support?*

Taking Action

