



U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

DHS Announces Imposition of Visa Sanctions on Burundi

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Burundi Has Failed to Accept Return of Nationals Subject to Removal Orders

WASHINGTON — Earlier this week, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in coordination with the Department of State, announced the imposition of visa sanctions on Burundi due to lack of cooperation in accepting its citizens and nationals ordered removed from the United States.

Pursuant to his authority under Section 243(d) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), Acting Secretary of Homeland Security Chad Wolf notified Secretary of State Michael Pompeo that the Government of Burundi has denied or unreasonably delayed accepting its citizens and nationals ordered removed from the United States.

As a result, Secretary of State Pompeo has ordered consular officers to implement visa restrictions on certain categories of visa applicants. The suspension will remain in place until the Secretary of Homeland Security notifies the Secretary of State that cooperation on removals has improved to an acceptable level.

The decision to sanction a recalcitrant country is not taken lightly. DHS makes significant efforts, in collaboration with the Department of State, to encourage countries to accept the prompt, lawful return of their citizens or nationals who are subject to removal from the United States. Those efforts include diplomatic communications at the highest levels of government. The U.S. Government stands ready to renew efforts with the Government of Burundi to facilitate the removal of Burundian nationals subject to final orders of removal.

As a general matter, countries that refuse to issue travel documents frustrate the United States' removal process as enacted by Congress in the INA, and such countries also fail to meet their international obligations to take back their nationals who have been ordered removed.

“This announcement is about ensuring the safety of the American people and upholding the rule of law. Given that Burundi has failed to cooperate with the United States on these serious matters of immigration and public safety, we have no choice but to impose sanctions. As the leadership changes for Burundi, we’re hopeful for a renewed commitment to cooperation between our nations for the benefit of each country’s citizens. We look forward to future discussions to resolve this ongoing issue,” said Secretary Chad F. Wolf.

Further, based on the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Zadvydas v. Davis*, with narrow exceptions, aliens with final orders of removal, including aliens determined to pose a threat to the community or considered a flight risk, may not be detained beyond a presumptively reasonable period of six months if there is no “significant likelihood of removal in the reasonably foreseeable future.” By delaying or refusing to issue travel documents to their citizens and nationals, the most common of which is a passport, countries that refuse to accept their citizens and nationals within that period have forced U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to release thousands of dangerous criminals into communities across the United States. Without a travel document issued by an alien’s home country to confirm identity and nationality, ICE cannot complete the removal process, with very limited exceptions.

Due to lack of travel document issuance, ICE continues to be compelled to release Burundian nationals into U.S. communities, some with serious criminal convictions, including violent offenses and drug convictions.

Specific sanctions effective June 12, 2020 are listed below:

As of June 12, 2020, the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura, Burundi has discontinued issuance of all nonimmigrant visas (NIVs) for Burundian citizens and nationals applying in Burundi except for A1, A2, C2, G1, G2, G3, G4, NATO1, NATO2, NATO3, NATO4, NATO5, and NATO6 visas, and other whose travel is covered by Section 11 of the U.N. Headquarters Agreement, subject to limited exceptions.

Topics: [Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(/topics/immigration-enforcement/\)](/topics/immigration-enforcement/), [Secretary of Homeland Security \(/topics/secretary-homeland-security/\)](/topics/secretary-homeland-security/).

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