

# Judge Orders Trump Administration to Resume Foreign Aid Spending

*The judge faulted the logic of a blanket freeze on foreign aid spending and found that groups that depend on the aid had made a strong initial showing of “irreparable harm.”*

By **Michael Crowley**  
**New York Times**

A federal judge ordered the Trump administration on Thursday night to unfreeze foreign aid spending President Trump halted during his first week in office, the latest of several legal roadblocks to Mr. Trump’s aggressive first-month agenda.

The ruling by Judge Amir H. Ali of the Federal District Court in Washington found that Mr. Trump’s executive order imposing a blanket freeze on U.S. foreign aid spending was based on dubious logic. He said it was also probably causing irreparable harm to aid groups, which face devastating financial shortfalls and, in some cases, shutdown.

In response, Judge Ali, a Biden appointee, issued a temporary injunction saying that the Trump administration could not freeze foreign aid spending that predates Mr. Trump’s inauguration, nor could it fire or suspend workers associated with those spending projects.

The ruling reverses a decision that had [thrown into turmoil](#) programs that provide shelter for millions of people and fight hunger and illness around the globe. Other court decisions have also [blocked](#) the administration from carrying out its plan to virtually dismantle the U.S. Agency for International Development, the main government organization that provides humanitarian aid, and put its employees on administrative leave.

In his 15-page ruling, Judge Ali said that the plaintiffs — a coalition of aid groups, businesses, and health and media nonprofits — had “made a strong preliminary showing of irreparable harm.”

He cited the example of one nonprofit that protects refugees and asylum seekers. It reported having to lay off 535 staff members after losing federal grants, shutter program offices and defer payments to its vendors.

Judge Ali was unpersuaded that the administration’s use of waivers to allow some foreign aid programs to continue was a meaningful defense. He cited testimony indicating that even in some cases when funding had been deemed essential and granted a waiver by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, the money remained stalled.

“Such waivers do not address the problem, because a business cannot halt global supply chains midstream and then resume operations with uncertainty as to whether it will have to halt again in 30 days,” he wrote. Trump administration lawyers, he wrote, “pointed to the waiver process but did not rebut this evidence, acknowledging that the waiver process may have had ‘hiccups.’”

Judge Ali was also skeptical about the Trump administration’s stated rationale for the freeze: to allow for a review in part to locate what it claims is hidden wasteful spending.

Trump administration lawyers “have not offered any explanation for why a blanket suspension of all congressionally appropriated foreign aid, which set off a shock wave and upended reliance interests for thousands of agreements with businesses, nonprofits and organizations around the country, was a rational precursor to reviewing programs,” he wrote.

Judge Ali did not entirely embrace the plaintiffs’ request, denying their request that he entirely block Mr. Trump’s executive order. Judge Ali said there was no reason to block, for instance, Mr. Trump’s call for an internal review of foreign aid spending.

The judge ordered the Trump administration to file a status report by Tuesday showing its compliance with his order.