

Suspending and Terminating the Asylum Cooperative Agreements with the Governments El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras

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The United States has suspended and initiated the process to terminate the Asylum Cooperative Agreements with the Governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras as the first concrete steps on the path to greater partnership and collaboration in the region laid out by President Biden. The termination of these Agreements is effective after the notice period stipulated in each of the Agreements, but their suspension is immediate.

In the February 2 Executive Order aimed at creating a comprehensive regional framework to address the causes of migration, manage migration throughout North and Central America, and provide safe and orderly processing of asylum seekers at the U.S. border, the President set an ambitious course to work with our partners – governments, international and non-governmental organization partners, civil society, and the private sector – to build more resilient societies across the region.

In line with the President’s vision, we have notified the Governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras that the United States is taking this action as efforts to establish a cooperative, mutually respectful approach to managing migration across the region begin. Transfers under the U.S.-Guatemala Asylum Cooperative Agreement had been paused since mid-March 2020 due to COVID-19, and the Agreements with El Salvador and Honduras were never implemented.

To be clear, these actions do not mean that the U.S. border is open. While we are committed to expanding legal pathways for protection and opportunity here and in the region, the United States is a country with borders and laws that must be enforced. We are also committed to providing safe and orderly processing for all who arrive at our border, but those who attempt to migrate irregularly are putting themselves and their families at risk on what can be a very dangerous journey.

The Biden administration believes there are more suitable ways to work with our partner governments to manage migration across the region. The United States will build on our strong relationships and support these governments’ efforts to address forced displacement without placing undue burden on them, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our approach will continue to provide support for their national action plans under the Comprehensive Regional Protection and Solutions Framework through international humanitarian partners.

We will address the root causes of forced displacement and irregular migration, including by combatting corruption and impunity, upholding our obligations to protect refugees, and working collaboratively with our partners to promote opportunity and prosperity for people and communities across the region.