



## LIVES AT RISK

CHAOTIC AND ABRUPT CUTS TO FOREIGN AID PUT MILLIONS OF LIVES AT RISK

RESEARCH  
BRIEFING

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The United States’ abrupt cuts to foreign assistance undermine the cooperation that is the foundation of the multilateral system and cause and exacerbate human rights harms against vulnerable populations globally. The cuts have ended life-saving programs without reasonable warning, have put people’s rights to life and health at risk, and could force more people to flee their homes.

# 1. ABRUPT AND ARBITRARY TERMINATION OF FOREIGN AID PUTS HUMAN RIGHTS AT RISK GLOBALLY

This briefing provides an initial assessment of the devastating impacts of the wide scale, arbitrary and abrupt stoppage of the United States' foreign assistance to thousands of life-saving humanitarian, health, and human rights initiatives globally in response to the executive order 'Reevaluating and realigning United States Foreign Aid' issued by President Donald Trump on 20 January 2025.<sup>1</sup>

Given the short time the policy has been in place and ongoing litigation over its validity, this briefing does not provide a full assessment of its impact. It is based principally on analysis of public documents, including court filings and executive orders, news and civil society reports, and legal frameworks carried out between January and May 2025. The analysis is complemented by 43 interviews, as well as ongoing communication with NGOs, international organizations, public health specialists, and aid workers. Due to fear of reprisals and/or a desire to maintain relationships with funders in a context of shrinking civil society space, Amnesty International has mostly refrained from naming organizations it spoke with and has used information anonymously. It provides non-exhaustive case-studies of the impacts of US aid cuts to programs providing healthcare, life-saving support, and other human rights-related services in 12 countries where Amnesty International has been able to obtain access to information on the ground from reliable sources, and/or has recent or ongoing research and campaigns.

Prior to the Trump administration's cuts, programs funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the US Department of State, the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM) and the US Department of Labor had delivered foreign assistance in 177 countries.<sup>2</sup> This included life-saving humanitarian aid, as well as funding for health sector development, clean water and sanitation, education and school supplies, agricultural programs to support food security, protection for human rights defenders and press freedom, whilst also addressing abusive workplaces and child labour. All of these were vital to guaranteeing the human rights of millions of beneficiaries.

On average since 2001, according to the Pew Research Center, US foreign assistance has ranged between 0.7% and 1.4% of the US government budget.<sup>3</sup> In 2022, US foreign assistance funding represented about 1% of the US government's budget,<sup>4</sup> supporting development, humanitarian efforts, and the protection of human rights around the world.<sup>5</sup> While the US contributed more overseas aid than any other single country,<sup>6</sup> in 2024 the US contributed only 0.22% in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) as a percentage of its Gross National Income (GNI), and has consistently fallen well below the globally agreed commitment of 0.7% for high-income countries, ranking comparatively low in its overseas aid contributions compared with other high-income countries.<sup>7</sup>

This briefing provides a stark warning of the unfolding negative impacts from the abrupt disruption in US foreign assistance previously appropriated by the United States Congress and funding of active

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<sup>1</sup> Executive Order, Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid, 20 January 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/reevaluating-and-realigning-united-states-foreign-aid/>.

<sup>2</sup> Congress.Gov, "U.S. Foreign Assistance", <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF10183> (accessed 16 May 2025); Pew Research Center, "What the data says about U.S. foreign aid", 6 February 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/02/06/what-the-data-says-about-us-foreign-aid/>.

<sup>3</sup> Pew Research Center, "What the data says about U.S. foreign aid" (previously cited).

<sup>4</sup> Congress.Gov, "U.S. Foreign Assistance" (previously cited).

<sup>5</sup> Amnesty International, "Mass Termination of USA Foreign Assistance Awards Devastating for Global Human Rights and Humanitarian Efforts", 27 February 2025, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/mass-termination-of-u-s-foreign-assistance-awards-devastating-for-global-human-rights-and-humanitarian-efforts/>; Congress.Gov, "U.S. Foreign Assistance" (previously cited).

<sup>6</sup> UN News, "Guterres calls on US to exempt development and humanitarian funds from aid 'pause'", 27 January 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/01/1159486>

<sup>7</sup> OECD, "Official development assistance (ODA)", <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/official-development-assistance-oda.html> (accessed 15 May 2025); NPR, "Why The U.S. Ranks At The Bottom In A Foreign Aid Index", 18 September 2018, <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2018/09/18/649155725/why-the-u-s-ranks-at-the-bottom-in-a-foreign-aid-index>.

programs around the world at the time of the cuts. These sweeping cuts come amid the Trump administration's increasing embrace of authoritarian practises – including disregarding court orders, threatening to impeach judges, targeting journalists, suing media outlets, abusing executive power, and eroding checks and balances – all aimed at centralizing power, undermining the rule of law and encroaching upon the authority of Congress.<sup>8</sup> The decision to suspend foreign assistance was made unilaterally by the Executive branch, in violation of the separation of powers by ignoring congressional authority.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, it did not follow established rescission and deferral processes pertaining to the ability of the President to decide not to spend money that has been appropriated by Congress.<sup>10</sup>

President Trump took this executive action simultaneously with issuing various other executive orders that prohibit or alter the US' engagement with different multilateral institutions and agreements. The Trump administration has, among other things, withdrawn the US from the Paris Climate Agreement,<sup>11</sup> began the process of withdrawing from the World Health Organization (WHO),<sup>12</sup> ended its participation in the UN Human Rights Council, reviewed its membership of The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), cut funding for The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA),<sup>13</sup> and sanctioned the International Criminal Court (ICC).<sup>14</sup> President Trump's 4 February 2025 executive order withdrawing from various UN agencies also mandated a 180-day review of all international intergovernmental organizations of which the US is a member, and to which it provides any type of funding or other support, and of all conventions and treaties to which the United States is a party, to determine which are contrary to the interests of the United States, and whether they can be reformed or not.<sup>15</sup> At the time of writing, there are no public updates on this process.

Cuts to international aid have largely happened in a context of discriminatory executive orders, racist and xenophobic rhetoric and attacks on the rights of women, LGBTQIA+ people, Black and other racialized communities, migrants – especially those in a precarious situation – and asylum seekers and refugees. While being framed as neutral, cost-saving and efficiency measures,<sup>16</sup> the cuts create discriminatory outcomes for racialized groups, women, LGBTQIA+ people, and others.

By way of example, during a 4 March 2025 address to Congress, President Trump used discriminatory language to refer to some of the funding cuts to foreign assistance and beyond, and demonized assistance provided to refugees, migrants and LGBTQIA+ individuals around the world,<sup>17</sup> including by making unsubstantiated claims that the aid was fraudulent.<sup>18</sup> President Trump stated,

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<sup>8</sup> Amnesty International, *USA: Chaos & cruelty: 10 compounding assaults on human rights: A review of President Trump's first 100 days in office*, 30 April 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/9313/2025/en/>.

<sup>9</sup> US Constitution, Article I; US District Court for the District of Columbia, *Global Health Council and others v. Donald Trump and others*, Civil action no. 25-cv-402, Order, 13 February 2025, <http://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69628254/21/global-health-council-v-donald-j-trump/>, pp. 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> Tax Policy Center, "What are rescissions?", January 2024, <https://taxpolicycenter.org/briefing-book/what-are-rescissions>.

<sup>11</sup> Executive Order, Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements, 20 January 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/putting-america-first-in-international-environmental-agreements/>.

<sup>12</sup> Executive Order, Withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization, 20 January 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-the-worldhealth-organization/>.

<sup>13</sup> Executive Order, Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to all International Organizations, 4 February 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-and-ending-funding-to-certain-united-nations-organizations-and-reviewing-united-states-support-to-all-international-organizations/>.

<sup>14</sup> Executive Order, Imposing Sanctions on the International Criminal Court, 6 February 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-sanctions-on-the-international-criminal-court/>.

<sup>15</sup> Executive Order, Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to all International Organizations (previously cited).

<sup>16</sup> New York Times "Fact-Checking Claims About U.S.A.I.D. Funding", 12 February 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/08/us/politics/usaid-funding-trump-fact-check.html>; Amnesty International, *USA: Chaos & cruelty* (previously cited).

<sup>17</sup> New York Times, "Full transcript of President Trump's Speech to Congress", 4 March 2025, <http://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/04/us/politics/transcript-trump-speech-congress.html>.

<sup>18</sup> PBS News, "Fact-checking Trump's claims during his address to Congress", 5 March 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/fact-checking-trumps-claims-during-his-address-to-congress>; Robert Mackey, "Out-of-date polls to wrong aid amounts: factchecking Trump's Congress address", The Guardian, 5 March 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/05/trump-congress-address-fact-check>; Stephen Fowler "DOGE released data about federal contract savings. It doesn't add up", NPR, 19 February 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/02/19/nx-s1-5302705/doge-overstates-savings-federal-contracts>; New York Times "Fact-Checking Claims About U.S.A.I.D. Funding" (previously cited).

“Just listen to some of the appalling waste we have already identified ... \$45 million for diversity, equity, and inclusion scholarships in Burma. \$40 million to improve the social and economic inclusion of sedentary migrants. Nobody knows what that is. \$8 million to promote L.G.B.T.Q.I.+ in the African nation of Lesotho, which nobody has ever heard of. \$60 million for Indigenous peoples and Afro-Caribbean empowerment in Central America — \$60 million.”<sup>19</sup> President Trump added, “Under the Trump administration, all of these scams — and there are far worse — but I didn’t think it was appropriate to talk about them. They’re so bad. Many more have been found out and exposed and swiftly terminated by a group of very intelligent, mostly young people headed up by Elon, and we appreciate it. We found hundreds of billions of dollars of fraud.”<sup>20</sup>

In line with this discriminatory approach, any restoration of funding appears to have included limitations on what types of activities the funding can be used for and has often excluded activities related to gender, LGBTQIA+ rights, diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, sexual and reproductive rights, refugee and migrant rights, and climate justice. For example, the waiver for life-saving humanitarian assistance programs defined that assistance as “core life-saving medicine, medical services, food, shelter, and subsistence assistance, as well as supplies and reasonable administrative costs as necessary to deliver such assistance”, but explicitly excluded activities that involve “abortions, family planning, gender or DEI ideology programs, transgender surgeries or other non-life saving assistance.”<sup>21</sup> Not only does this approach fail to recognize that family planning and gender-related programs save lives, for example, through reducing maternal mortality or mother-to-child HIV transmission, but in turn signals that the US authorities believe that the people these programs serve are unworthy of human rights. It is important to note that for over 50 years, Congress has prohibited foreign assistance funding for abortion services.<sup>22</sup> In this same sense, according to news reports, a questionnaire sent out by the Department of State to organizations that had been implementing projects with US foreign assistance included questions asking projects to confirm that they “contribute to limiting illegal immigration” or “take appropriate measures to protect women and defend against gender ideology”, and to confirm that the project is does not have “DEI elements” or is not a “climate or environmental justice project”.<sup>23</sup>

In order to guarantee a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society organizations, States are required to dedicate sufficient funding and facilitate access to resources for the purpose of defending human rights.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, international cooperation and assistance for development, including for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, is an obligation of all states that are in a position to provide this, particularly for states that are most able to assist,<sup>25</sup> which would include the United States as one of the richest economies in the world. Under international human rights law and standards, decisions to cut or suspend funding for civil society organizations must meet the requirements of legality, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality in order to avert undue interference with the right to freedom of association, including the right to seek and receive funding, enshrined in Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to which the US is a party.

The US’ rapid withdrawal from multilateral spaces and international cooperation has been abrupt, opaque and chaotic, lacking clear and precise guidelines whilst raising serious legal questions

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<sup>19</sup> New York Times, “Full transcript of President Trump’s Speech to Congress” (previously cited).

<sup>20</sup> New York Times, “Full transcript of President Trump’s Speech to Congress” (previously cited).

<sup>21</sup> US Department of State, “Emergency Humanitarian Wavier to Foreign Assistance Pause”, 28 January 2025, <https://www.state.gov/emergency-humanitarian-waiver-to-foreign-assistance-pause/>.

<sup>22</sup> Congress, Abortion funding restrictions in foreign assistance legislation, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12235#>; KFF, “The Helms Amendment and Abortion Laws in Countries Receiving U.S. Global Health Assistance”, 18 January 2022, <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/the-helms-amendment-and-abortion-laws-in-countries-receiving-u-s-global-health-assistance/>.

<sup>23</sup> Politico, “State Department further scrutinizes foreign aid for DEI, climate and transgender projects”, 5 March 2025, <http://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/05/state-department-scrutinizes-foreign-aid-00213143>.

<sup>24</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Report, 28 July 2011, UN Doc. A/66/203, para. 119.

<sup>25</sup> UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment 3: The Nature of States Parties’ Obligations (Art. 2, Para. 1, of the Covenant) 14 December 1990, UN Doc. E/1991/23, para. 14; UN Charter, Articles 55 & 56.

currently being addressed in the US domestic courts. The sweeping cuts, which have been accompanied by discriminatory and racist language, and attacks on the rights of women and LGBTQIA+ people, Black and other racialized communities, migrants – especially those in a precarious situation – and asylum seekers and refugees, are another example of the Trump administration’s increasing use of authoritarian practices to entrench power, instil fear and evade accountability. Exacerbating the problem, the US aid cuts appear to be part of a broader recent trend of aid cuts, and as the world’s richest economy, will likely have further detrimental impacts on other countries’ willingness to uphold their aid commitments, with a number of European countries also reducing overseas development aid.<sup>26</sup> Yet, the speed, scale and manner of the US cuts are unique insofar as they have gravely undermined cooperation that has been the foundation of the post World War II multilateral system, and exacerbated harms against populations already in vulnerable situations globally, leading to particular harm to marginalized groups.

## 2. WHY IS FOREIGN ASSISTANCE A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE?

The freeze and subsequent elimination of swathes of US foreign assistance programs around the world, which have caused abrupt interruption or wind down of vital services without sufficient warning, must be assessed in light of the United States’ obligations and commitments under a range of international human rights law and standards. These actions have undermined the freedom of association of multiple civil society organizations, potentially resulting in their complete dissolution. Moreover, as a consequence, the rights of millions of people around the world are at risk, with marginalized groups experiencing discriminatory outcomes.

### **INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE AND COOPERATION FOR THE PROGRESSIVE REALIZATION OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS**

According to the UN Charter, which codifies key principles of international relations, all members of the UN, including the US, have committed to “to take joint and separate action in co-operation with the Organization for the achievement of...”, among other things, “higher standards of living”, “economic and social progress and development”, “solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems” and “international cultural and educational cooperation”.<sup>27</sup> This has been reinforced by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which provides authoritative interpretation of the ICESCR, when it states that international cooperation and assistance for development and realization of economic, social and cultural rights is an obligation of all states, and is “particularly incumbent upon those States which are in a position to assist others in this regard.”<sup>28</sup>

The ICESCR, which the US has signed but not ratified,<sup>29</sup> in Article 2(1) sets out that states should “take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights” contained in the Covenant.<sup>30</sup> States such as the US, that have signed but not

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<sup>26</sup> Chatham House, “First USAID closes, then UK cuts aid: what a Western retreat from foreign aid could mean”, 3 March 2025, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2025/03/first-usaid-closes-then-uk-cuts-aid-what-western-retreat-foreign-aid-could-mean>; The Guardian, “EU will struggle to fill gap left by USAID as European countries cut their budgets”, 15 April 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/apr/15/eu-struggle-fill-gap-usaid-european-countries-cut-budgets>.

<sup>27</sup> UN Charter, Articles 55 & 56

<sup>28</sup> UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment 3: The Nature of States Parties’ Obligations (Art. 2, Para. 1, of the Covenant) 14 December 1990, UN Doc. E/1991/23, para. 14.

<sup>29</sup> OHCHR, “Ratification Status for United States of America”, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=187&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=187&Lang=en) (accessed 15 May 2025); OHCHR, “Ratification Status for United States of America”, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=187&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?CountryID=187&Lang=en) (accessed 15 May 2025).

<sup>30</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 2(1).

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ratified the Covenant, should take treaty commitments seriously and avoid acts that would defeat the object and purpose of such treaties.<sup>31</sup> By taking such a consequential decision to abruptly end such significant levels of international assistance and co-operation it is highly likely that the US is defeating the object and purpose of Article 2(1).<sup>32</sup>

For many decades the US has supported states across the world through the delivery of aid to fulfil progressive realization of a wide range of economic, social and cultural rights. Based on grant or contractual obligations with US aid agencies or NGOs in the US, and rooted in the long-standing high-level political commitment of UN member states to commit at least 0.7% of their GNI to overseas aid,<sup>33</sup> many low and middle-income countries have been reliant, to varying degrees, on the contributions made by the US to support in the delivery of their minimum core obligations under ICESCR for a host of life-saving economic and social rights, such as the right to health.<sup>34</sup> For example, among other things, these include the right to access healthcare without discrimination, especially for marginalized groups, access to minimum essential food, basic shelter, sanitation, and clean water, and provision of essential medicines.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, in order for states to comply with their obligations related to the right to health, states should respect the enjoyment of health in other countries, prevent third parties from violating the right in other countries if they are able to influence them, and should facilitate access to essential healthcare and provide aid when required.<sup>36</sup>

Based on the Maastricht Principles, a set of guidelines on the extraterritorial obligations of states, the US also has obligations to respect, protect and fulfil economic, social and cultural rights in circumstances where “acts or omissions bring about foreseeable effects on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights” either within or outside its own territory.<sup>37</sup> It should also “desist from acts and omissions that create a real risk of nullifying or impairing the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights extraterritorially”,<sup>38</sup> and should conduct impact assessments, with public participation, of any risks or even potential risks to economic, social and cultural rights outside of the US territory that could flow from US laws, policies, and practices.<sup>39</sup>

## **EXTRATERRITORIAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE UNITED STATES TO PROTECT THE RIGHT TO LIFE AND NON-DISCRIMINATION**

According to the Maastricht Principles, the US also has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil civil and political rights within the US and extraterritorially.<sup>40</sup> Based on these principles, and its binding commitments under Article 6 of the ICCPR, the US should take measures to address threats to life from diseases such as HIV, tuberculosis (TB), malaria, as well as from hunger, malnutrition and extreme poverty, among other things,<sup>41</sup> both within the United States and overseas.<sup>42</sup> According to the same guidelines,<sup>43</sup> and as a state party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms

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<sup>31</sup> Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, Article 18; The US has signed but not ratified the Vienna Convention - United Nations Treaty Collective, “Status of Treaties: Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties”, [https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=XXIII-1&chapter=23&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=\\_en](https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXIII-1&chapter=23&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=_en) (accessed 15 May 2025).

<sup>32</sup> Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, Article 18.

<sup>33</sup> UN General Assembly (UNGA), Resolution 2626: International Development Strategy for the Second United Nations Development Decade, adopted on 24 October 1970, UN Doc. A/8124, para. 43.

<sup>34</sup> International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 12; UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Article 12), 11 August 2000, UN Doc. E/C.12/2000/4, paras 43-44.

<sup>35</sup> UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment 14 (previously cited), para. 43(a)-(d).

<sup>36</sup> UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment 14 (previously cited), para. 39.

<sup>37</sup> Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations of States in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Principle 9b.

<sup>38</sup> Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations (previously cited), Principle 13.

<sup>39</sup> Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations (previously cited), Principle 14.

<sup>40</sup> Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations (previously cited), Principle 3.

<sup>41</sup> ICCPR, Article 6; UN Human Rights Committee, General Comment 36, Article 6 right to life, 3 September 2019, Un Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 26.

<sup>42</sup> Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations (previously cited), Principle 9b.

<sup>43</sup> Maastricht Principles on Extraterritorial Obligations (previously cited), Principle 2.

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of Racial Discrimination<sup>44</sup> the US must also refrain from direct and indirect discrimination, protect people from discrimination from third parties, and take legislative, policy, and other steps to provide an environment in which people can realize rights without discrimination.<sup>45</sup>

As highlighted by more than 30 UN independent experts in a letter to the US, “the decision to freeze DEI-related grants, as well as the vague language regarding the withdrawal of funds from programs that do not align with “administration priorities,” risks disproportionately affecting marginalized groups, particularly women and girls.”<sup>46</sup> In light of US obligations under international human rights law, the experts stated, “Freezing DEI initiatives without an alternative framework for addressing discrimination fails to meet the government’s obligations under both domestic and international legal frameworks.”<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, by excluding funding for gender, sexual reproductive and health rights, LGBTQIA+ or DEI programming, the US goes against the Maastricht Principles by facilitating extraterritorial discrimination and undermining the right to health.

## THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The United States' abrupt and arbitrary decision to significantly reduce aid stands to have far-reaching impacts on the ability of civil society organizations around the world to continue operating, affecting their ability to uphold, protect and defend human rights and to exercise their freedom of association, protected under Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which the US is party.<sup>48</sup>

As noted by more than 30 UN independent experts in a letter sent to the United States earlier this year, the decisions by the US to freeze foreign assistance were “marked by a lack of transparency and clarity, a failure to consult, particularly with domestic civil society organizations and other affected associations... and [by] measures that are seemingly arbitrary and far-reaching scope rather than legally tailored, necessary, proportional and measured approaches that respect due process and the rule of law.”<sup>49</sup> According to the independent experts, actions by the US authorities, “affects deeply the exercise of the freedom of association, among other rights,”<sup>50</sup> and may easily result in the dissolution of a very wide range of civil society organizations with a corresponding shrinking of civic space in multiple countries.<sup>51</sup>

States’ positive obligation to establish and maintain an enabling environment for associations extends to fostering the ability to solicit, receive and utilize resources.<sup>52</sup> Governments must ensure that any restrictions on existing or future funding, including those they grant to non-governmental organizations abroad, comply with the three-part test that is set out by Article 22 of the ICCPR: legality, legitimate aim under international human rights law, necessity and proportionality.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, any restrictions must comply with the principle of non-discrimination.

While the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association has recognized that independent bodies have a legitimate reason to examine the associations’ records to ensure transparency and accountability, states must ensure that this procedure is not arbitrary and

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<sup>44</sup> OHCHR, “Ratification Status for United States of America”, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?Treaty=CERD](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Treaty.aspx?Treaty=CERD) (accessed 16 May 2025).

<sup>45</sup> International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.

<sup>46</sup> UN Special Procedures, Communication to the USA, 21 February 2025, OL USA 5/2025, p. 20, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=29718>.

<sup>47</sup> UN Special Procedures, Communication to the USA, 21 February 2025 (previously cited), p. 20.

<sup>48</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 22.

<sup>49</sup> UN Special Procedures, Communication to the USA, 21 February 2025 (previously cited), p.11.

<sup>50</sup> UN Special Procedures, Communication to the USA, 21 February 2025 (previously cited), p.11.

<sup>51</sup> UN Special Procedures, Communication to the USA, 21 February 2025 (previously cited), p. 3.

<sup>52</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Report, 4 August 2015, UN Doc A/70/266, paras 79-80; Resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly A/RES/53/144, Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Declaration on HRDs), Art. 13, 1999, <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Defenders/Declaration/declaration.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 22(2).

that it is respectful of the rights to non-discrimination and privacy as it would otherwise put the independence of associations and the safety of their members at risk.<sup>54</sup>

Specifically, the abrupt and arbitrary withdrawal of US funding does not appear to stem from ensuring transparency and accountability, and does not appear to be aimed at any legitimate aim under international human rights law. In contrast, it has a discriminatory impact not only because the decisions to reinstate some funding have explicitly excluded marginalized groups but also because US funding has been a vital source for organizations in specific contexts where these groups are criminalized and discriminated against, such as it is the case for LGBTQIA+ people in Uganda.<sup>55</sup> In these contexts, the sudden and arbitrary withdrawal of US funding has a detrimental impact on the enjoyment of the right to freedom of association without any discrimination.

## **THE RIGHT TO APPLY FOR INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION FOR FORCED DISPLACEMENT SITUATIONS**

All individuals have the universal human right to seek and enjoy asylum from persecution and serious human rights violations.<sup>56</sup> All individuals also have the right not to be returned to places where their life or freedom may be endangered or where they would be at risk of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, regardless of their migration status.<sup>57</sup> The United States has both domestic and international obligations to ensure the right of individuals to seek asylum, to uphold the principle of *non-refoulement* at all times, and to protect and respect the human rights of all people without exception, including asylum seekers and migrants.<sup>58</sup> This includes the obligation of allowing them access to territory, as well as the protection of their rights to life, personal integrity, equality and non-discrimination, liberty, and to be free from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, as well as adequate shelter, assistance and health care.<sup>59</sup>

The United States is a part of global commitments and international cooperation frameworks whose aims are to respond to forced displacement in ways that fairly and equitably share responsibility across states, including the Global Compact on Refugees and the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection.<sup>60</sup> The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly on 19 September 2016, paved the way for the Global Compact on Refugees. The Global Compact sets out a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) to be applied to large-scale movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations, including how communities and countries that host large numbers of refugees can support and share responsibility.<sup>61</sup> The US has both international human rights obligations, as well as global commitments that it has made through these international cooperation frameworks, to contribute

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<sup>54</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Report, 21 May 2012, UN Doc. A/HRC/20/27, para. 65.

<sup>55</sup> Amnesty International, “Uganda: “Everybody here is having two lives or phones”: The devastating impact of criminalization on digital spaces for LGBTQ people in Uganda”, 23 October 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr59/8571/2024/en/>.

<sup>56</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 14; 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees; 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees; Cartagena Declaration on Refugees, American Convention on Human Rights, Article 22.7.

<sup>57</sup> 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 33; Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Article 3(1), American Convention on Human Rights, Article 22.8.

<sup>58</sup> The United States is State party to the 1967 United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and is therefore bound to comply, with the obligations deriving from the 1967 Protocol as well as, by incorporation, articles 2-34 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.

<sup>59</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; Convention against Torture.

<sup>60</sup> UN, Global Compact on Refugees, 2018, <https://www.unhcr.org/media/global-compact-refugees-booklet>; UNHCR, “The Global Compact on Refugees”, <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/overview/global-compact-refugees>; White House, “Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection”, 10 June 2022, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/06/10/los-angeles-declaration-on-migration-and-protection/>.

<sup>61</sup> UNGA, New York Declaration for Refugee and Migrants, A/RES/71/1, 3 October 2016; UN, Global Compact on Refugees (previously cited); UNHCR, New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/asylum-and-migration/new-york-declaration-refugees-and-migrants>; UNHCR, Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-we-do/protect-human-rights/asylum-and-migration/new-york-declaration-refugees-and-migrants-0>.

humanitarian assistance, including financial and technical assistance for populations who have been forcibly displaced.

The abrupt and arbitrary disruption of US foreign assistance has created chaos that has thrust governments into a position where they can no longer meet their human rights obligations and cannot in the short term reasonably make alternative arrangements to mitigate widespread harm that is predicted to ensue. Additional executive orders and policy positions of the US authorities have also exacerbated discriminatory outcomes that reinforce systemic racism and discrimination against already marginalized groups.

## 3. BACKGROUND ON THE US CUTS TO FOREIGN AID AND ASSISTANCE

### 3.1 EXECUTIVE ORDERS AND “STOP-WORK” ORDERS IMPACTING USAID AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

In 2022, the US disbursed approximately \$US 74 billion in foreign assistance,<sup>62</sup> representing about 1% of its federal budget.<sup>63</sup> In 2023 and 2024, it disbursed \$US 80 billion and \$US 59 billion respectively.<sup>64</sup> This funding contributed to economic development, peace and security, health, humanitarian assistance, education, and the environment, among other issues,<sup>65</sup> to help keep people across the world safe and healthy, and to assist developing countries to progressively realize a range of economic and social rights.

On 20 January 2025, an executive order titled, “Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid” resulted in a 90-day pause in United States foreign development assistance pending “reviews of such programs for programmatic efficiency and consistency with United States foreign policy,” as well as American interests and values.<sup>66</sup> The order allowed for waivers at the Secretary of State’s discretion.<sup>67</sup>

On 24 January, the US Department of State issued “stop-work” orders for all existing foreign aid programmes and halted new funding.<sup>68</sup> Concurrent to the “stop-work” orders, massive numbers of layoffs were issued for career staff at aid agencies, with entire departments gutted and programs shut down globally.<sup>69</sup>

The cuts to foreign assistance and dismantling of USAID were framed by the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) as efficiency measures and doing away with unnecessary government spending.<sup>70</sup> However, the Trump administration has not presented any substantial concrete evidence

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<sup>62</sup> Foreign Assistance Gov, “Dashboard”, <https://www.foreignassistance.gov/> (accessed 29 April 2025).

<sup>63</sup> Congress.Gov, “U.S. Foreign Assistance” (previously cited); Pew Research Center, “What the data says about U.S. foreign aid” (previously cited).

<sup>64</sup> Foreign Assistance Gov, “Dashboard” (previously cited).

<sup>65</sup> Foreign Assistance Gov, “Dashboard” (previously cited).

<sup>66</sup> Executive Order, Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid (previously cited).

<sup>67</sup> International Coalition of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), *Lives on the Line: The human impact of US foreign aid shifts*, March 2025, <https://www.icvanetwork.org/uploads/2025/03/Lives-on-the-Line-Final-Report.pdf>, p. 8.

<sup>68</sup> USAID, “Notice on Implementation of Executive Order on *Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid*”, 24 January 2025, <http://www.cogr.edu/sites/default/files/Notice%20on%20Implementation%20of%20Executive%20Order%20on%20Reevaluating%20and%20Realigning%20United%20States%20Foreign%20Aid.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> AP News, “Trump’s administration is pulling almost all USAID workers off the job worldwide”, 5 February 2025, <http://www.apnews.com/article/trump-usaid-layoffs-7e0a159d8a419c4c9388ab02e8259f23>.

<sup>70</sup> DOGE, <https://doge.gov/>; Reuters, “100 days of DOGE: lots of chaos, not so much efficiency”, 24 April 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/100-days-doge-lots-chaos-not-so-much-efficiency-2025-04-24/>; New York Times, “Final Cuts Will Eliminate U.S. Aid Agency in All but Name”, 28 March 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/28/us/politics/usaid-trump-doge-cuts.html>.

in this regard. In his testimony on May 21 and 22 in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, Secretary of State Marco Rubio provided weak or incomplete answers about the grave human rights impacts of the cuts.<sup>71</sup>

According to publicly available information and information filed in court proceedings brought against the executive order, approximately 5,200 USAID awards and approximately 4,100 Department of State awards were terminated.<sup>72</sup>

The decision to terminate foreign development assistance was taken simultaneously with other executive orders that prohibit or alter the US' engagement with different multilateral institutions and agreements. These include withdrawing the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Human Rights Council; reviewing the US' UNESCO membership; and, prohibiting US funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).<sup>73</sup> The executive order withdrawing the United States from various UN agencies mandated a 180-day review of all international intergovernmental organizations of which the USA is a member and provides any type of funding or other support to and of all conventions and treaties to which the United States is a party, to determine which are: contrary to the interests of the United States; and, whether or not they can be reformed.<sup>74</sup> The Trump administration also suspended the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP), cutting off safe and legal pathways for refugees around the world in need of resettlement.<sup>75</sup>

The Trump administration also announced that it will deny future funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).<sup>76</sup> This dangerous decision will disproportionately harm some of the world's most marginalized people, as it compounds the damage already wrought by the termination of more than \$US 300 million of funding to the agency for 40 humanitarian programs around the world.<sup>77</sup>

Other executive orders are highly likely to have influenced the termination of foreign aid for specific activities, disproportionately impacting organizations around the world working on LGBTQIA+ rights, sexual and reproductive rights, climate change and climate justice, and refugee and migrant rights. One executive order terminated all diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) mandates,

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<sup>71</sup> C-SPAN, "Secretary of State Rubio Testifies on 2026 Budget Request", 20 May 2025, <https://www.c-span.org/event/senate-committee/secretary-of-state-rubio-testifies-on-2026-budget-request/433256>; U.S. Department of State, "Secretary of State Marco Rubio Before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on the FY26 Department of State Budget Request", 21 May 2025, <https://www.state.gov/secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-before-the-house-committee-on-foreign-affairs-on-the-fy26-department-of-state-budget-request/>; U.S. Department of State, "Secretary of State Marco Rubio Before the House Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs on the FY26 Department of State Budget Request", 21 May 2025, <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/05/secretary-of-state-marco-rubio-before-the-house-committee-on-appropriations-subcommittee-on-state-foreign-operations-and-related-programs-on-the-fy26-department-of-state-budget-request/>; NPR, "Rubio defends Trump's foreign policy as Democrats grill him on Putin and aid cuts", 20 May 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/05/20/nx-s1-5404679/marco-rubio-senate-foreign-affairs>.

<sup>72</sup> X, Marco Rubio, 10 March 2025, <https://x.com/marcorubio/status/1899021361797816325>; US District Court for the District of Columbia, *Global Health Council and others v. Donald Trump and others*, Civil action no. 25-cv-402, Declaration – Document #43, 26 February 2025, <http://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69628254/43/1/global-health-council-v-donald-j-trump/>; Center for Global Development, "The USAID Cuts: Little Sign of Mercy for "Life-Saving" Health Programs", 14 March 2025, <http://www.cgdev.org/blog/usaids-cuts-little-sign-mercy-life-saving-health-programs>.

<sup>73</sup> Executive Order, Putting America First in International Environmental Agreements (previously cited); Executive Order, Withdrawing the United States from the World Health Organization (previously cited); Executive Order, Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to all International Organizations (previously cited).

<sup>74</sup> Executive Order, Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to all International Organizations (previously cited).

<sup>75</sup> Executive Order, Realigning the United States Refugee Admissions Program, 20 January 2025, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/realigning-the-united-states-refugee-admissions-program/>; Amnesty International, "Amnesty International USA Reaction to President Trump's Anti-Immigrant Executive Actions", 20 January 2025, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/amnesty-international-usa-reaction-to-president-trumps-anti-immigrant-executive-actions/>.

<sup>76</sup> UNFPA, "Statement in response to the United States decision to deny future funding to UNFPA", 9 May 2025, <https://www.unfpa.org/press/statement-response-united-states-decision-deny-future-funding-unfpa>; Amnesty International, "Trump Administration Shows Disregard for Global Human Rights by Cutting Funds for UNFPA", 9 May 2025, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/trump-administration-shows-disregard-for-global-human-rights-by-cutting-funds-for-unfpa/>.

<sup>77</sup> UNFPA, "Statement in response to the United States decision to deny future funding to UNFPA" (previously cited); UNFPA, "Statement by UNFPA Executive Director on the United States Government funding cuts", 28 February 2025, <https://www.unfpa.org/press/statement-unfpa-executive-director-united-states-government-funding-cuts>; Amnesty International, "Trump Administration Shows Disregard for Global Human Rights by Cutting Funds for UNFPA" (previously cited).

programs and policies in the federal government.<sup>78</sup> Another executive order declared it official US policy to recognize only two genders, “male and female”, and restricted the use of federal funds for gender-related initiatives.<sup>79</sup>

Amnesty International considers that the suspension of foreign development assistance and the issuance of “stop-work” orders for all existing foreign aid programmes were decisions made unilaterally by the Executive branch of government in violation of the separation of powers and established rescission and deferral processes, given that the President does not have unilateral authority to refuse to spend funds that Congress has appropriated.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, Amnesty International considers that the cuts to foreign aid and assistance are discriminatory under international law. Although the cuts have been sweeping across the humanitarian, health and civil society sectors, executive orders and waivers have targeted specific groups and issue areas for foreign aid cuts creating disproportionate impacts on marginalized groups. As such, the cuts risk reinforcing systemic discrimination and deepening existing structural inequalities.

## 3.2 WAIVERS AND RESTORATION OF SOME FOREIGN ASSISTANCE HAVE MADE LITTLE PRACTICAL DIFFERENCE

Following the issuance of “stop-work” orders, waivers were issued for some emergency food aid and existing life-saving humanitarian assistance programs.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, despite these waivers, USAID staff and funding recipients reported a great deal of uncertainty about what would be deemed “life-saving” or otherwise covered by the waiver rendering the waiver system ineffective in mitigating the impacts of the executive order.<sup>82</sup> Organizations that requested waivers did not know if they qualified or, upon applying, if they had been approved. Many programs, even after receiving waivers, could not access the funds to restart programs.<sup>83</sup> By the end of February 2025, USAID employees and contractors had also been furloughed or fired, and were not available to answer questions, communicate to grantees or otherwise support the waiver process.<sup>84</sup> According to publicly available information, the Trump administration plans to reduce USAID’s entire workforce to approximately 15 staff positions.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, the existence of waivers have made limited practical difference on the ground and the majority of programs remain frozen.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Executive Order, Ending Radical And Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing, 20 January 2025, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/>.

<sup>79</sup> Executive Order, Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government, 20 January 2025, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/>.

<sup>80</sup> US Constitution, Article I; US District Court for the District of Columbia, *Global Health Council and others v. Donald Trump and others*, Order, 13 February 2025 (previously cited), pp. 11-12; Human Rights Watch, “US: Trump Administration Guts Foreign Aid”, 28 February 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/02/28/us-trump-administration-guts-foreign-aid>; WOLA, “Trump’s Pause of U.S. Foreign Assistance to Latin America: An “America Last” Policy”, 31 January 2025, <https://www.wola.org/analysis/trumps-pause-of-u-s-foreign-assistance-to-latin-america-an-america-last-policy/>.

<sup>81</sup> US Department of State, “Emergency Humanitarian Waiver to Foreign Assistance Pause” (previously cited); USA Department of State, “HIV Care & Treatment and Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of Activities Approved under PEPFAR Limited Waiver”, 10 February 2025, [http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/GHSD\\_PEPFAR-Limited-Waiver-Approved-Activities.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/GHSD_PEPFAR-Limited-Waiver-Approved-Activities.pdf); International Coalition of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), *Lives on the Line* (previously cited), p. 8.

<sup>82</sup> Politico, “What does the state consider ‘life-saving’ aid?”, 29 January, 2025, <http://www.politico.com/newsletters/national-security-daily/2025/01/29/what-does-state-consider-life-saving-aid-00195922>; Human Rights Watch, “US: Lifesaving Programs Remain Suspended Despite Waivers”, 10 February 2025, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2025/02/10/us-lifesaving-programs-remain-suspended-despite-waivers>.

<sup>83</sup> US District Court for the District of Columbia, *Global Health Council and others v. Donald Trump and others*, Order, 13 February 2025 (previously cited), pp. 7-8; New York Times, “Lifesaving aid remains halted worldwide despite Rubio’s promise”, 12 February, 2025, <http://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/12/us/politics/usa-id-waivers-rubio.html>.

<sup>84</sup> New York Times, “Lifesaving aid remains halted worldwide despite Rubio’s promise” (previously cited); NPR, “USAID workers return to HQ to clear their desks, as Trump dismantles the agency”, 27 February 2025, <http://www.npr.org/2025/02/27/nx-s1-5311659/usa-id-workers-trump-administration-doge>.

<sup>85</sup> New York Times, “Final Cuts Will Eliminate U.S. Aid Agency in All but Name” (previously cited).

<sup>86</sup> CNN, “The US State Department says humanitarian assistance can continue. Foreign aid workers say that’s not happening”, 8 February 2025, <http://www.edition.cnn.com/2025/02/08/world/usa-id-humanitarian-assistance-aid-freeze-intl-latam/index.html>.

While some foreign assistance has been restored, according to the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) – a global network of 170 non-governmental organizations active in 160 countries –, the “payments system remain largely inaccessible, with hundreds of millions of dollars in reimbursements still owed to NGOs for completed work. This has severely impacted liquidity, posing an existential threat to many NGOs that rely on timely payments to continue operations”.<sup>87</sup> Some of the organizations interviewed by Amnesty International said that there was no consistency or predictability to the minimal payments they had received making operational planning difficult.<sup>88</sup>

### 3.3 LITIGATION OF THE CUTS IMPACTING USAID AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

Two lawsuits were filed in February 2025 against the Trump administration for dismantling USAID and freezing foreign aid.<sup>89</sup>

In response to these lawsuits, on 13 February, a DC District Judge issued a temporary restraining order requiring the Trump administration to restore foreign assistance.<sup>90</sup> On 25 February, that same judge ordered the Trump administration to release USD\$ 2 billion in foreign assistance within 48 hours.<sup>91</sup> While the Supreme Court intervened and temporarily blocked the order, subsequently on 5 March, it ordered the Trump administration to release the foreign aid assistance.<sup>92</sup> Litigation is ongoing. However, as of May 2025, the Trump administration had seemingly still not released all of the funding, in violation of the judicial order ordering that the foreign assistance be reinstated.

### 3.4 CUTS TO OTHER FOREIGN ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS PROMOTING LABOUR RIGHTS AND A FREE PRESS

In March 2024, the Trump administration terminated all grants to the US Department of Labor’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs due to a “lack of alignment with agency priorities and national interest”.<sup>93</sup> The cuts were effective immediately and ended 69 programs that have allocated more than \$US 500 million to combat child labour, forced labour and human trafficking, and to enforce labour standards in more than 40 countries.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> International Coalition of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), *Lives on the Line* (previously cited), p. 8; Danish Refugee Council, “Statement from the Secretary General, Charlotte Slente, following US termination of nearly all its funded aid programs”, 27 February 2025, <http://www.drc.ngo/resources/news/statement-from-the-secretary-general-charlotte-slente-following-us-termination-of-nearly-all-its-funded-aid-programs/>; Norwegian Refugee Council, “NRC forced to suspend even lifesaving US-funded aid this week”, 25 February 2025, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2025/february/nrc-forced-to-suspend-even-lifesaving-us-funded-aid-this-week>.

<sup>88</sup> Interview by video calls with NGO representatives, 12 April 2025; Email to Amnesty International with NGO, 19 April 2025, on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>89</sup> United States District Court for the District of Columbia, *American Foreign Service Association & American Federation of Government Employees v. Donald Trump and others*, civil action no. 25-cv-352, Complaint for Declaratory and Injunctive Relief, 6 February 2025, <http://www.democracyforward.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/AFSA-et-al-v.-Trump-et-al.pdf>; United States District Court for the District of Columbia, *Global Health Council and others v. Donald Trump and others*, Civil action no. 25-cv-402, Complaint for declaratory and injunctive relief, 11 February 2025, <http://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69628254/global-health-council-v-donald-j-trump/>; AVAC, “AVAC v. United States Department of State”, <https://avac.org/avac-vs-dept-of-state/>.

<sup>90</sup> US District Court for the District of Columbia, *Global Health Council and others v. Donald Trump and others*, Order, 13 February 2025 (previously cited).

<sup>91</sup> US District Court for the District of Columbia, *Global Health Council and others v. Donald Trump and others*, Civil action no. 25-cv-402, Docket, 25 February 2025, <http://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69628254/global-health-council-v-donald-j-trump/>; AP News, “Judge gives Trump administration two days to release billions of dollars in blocked foreign aid”, 25 February 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/funding-freeze-usaid-trump-d592d015249934827e023c65e644c51a>.

<sup>92</sup> Supreme Court of the United States, *Department of State, et al. v. AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition, et al.*, No. 24A831, 604 USA (2025), <https://www.courthousenews.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/scotus-lifts-pause-usaid-contractor-funding-against-trump-request.pdf>.

<sup>93</sup> Washington Post, “Trump administration moves to cut programs that fight child labor abroad”, 27 March, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/03/27/trump-labor-department-international-child-labor/>; Economic Policy Institute, “Department of Labor terminates grants that fight international human trafficking, promote labor rights”, 9 April 2025, <https://www.epi.org/policywatch/department-of-labor-terminates-grants-that-fight-international-human-trafficking-promote-labor-rights/>.

<sup>94</sup> US Department of Labor, ILAB Knowledge Portal, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/projects-search>.

#### LIVES AT RISK

CHAOTIC AND ABRUPT CUTS TO FOREIGN AID PUT MILLIONS OF LIVES AT RISK

Amnesty International

According to publicly available information, among the terminated grants are congressionally authorized programs that allocate millions to non-governmental organizations to combat child labour and forced labour in agriculture in Mexico, labour abuses in the garment industry in Southeast Asia, human rights abuses in fisheries along the coasts of South America, and mica-mining by children in Madagascar used to produce Chinese electronics and automobile parts sold in the United States.<sup>95</sup> The termination of these programs will almost certainly render workers more vulnerable to unsafe labour conditions and put them at increased risk of exploitation.<sup>96</sup>

Also in March, President Trump signed an executive order that sought to reduce the scope of the United States Agency for Global Media (USAGM), a federal agency that oversees various US taxpayer funded media outlets including Voice of America (VOA), Radio Free Asia (RFA), and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.<sup>97</sup> The resultant shutdown of these media outlets weakens the role of free and independent press globally with a direct impact on the right to freedom of expression and the ability of thousands of people to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds regardless of frontiers.

VOA, still primarily a radio service, was set up during World War Two to counter Nazi propaganda and was reaching hundreds of millions of people globally when the executive order was signed.<sup>98</sup> On March 15, almost all VOA employees (approximately 1,300 people) were put on administrative leave and the next day, around 500 VOA contractors were let go.<sup>99</sup> While a temporary restraining order by a federal judge has been issued in response to a lawsuit by journalists and persons affected by the abrupt shutdown of VOA, the news outlet continues to be off air.<sup>100</sup>

The impact of the abrupt and arbitrary shutdowns of these media outlets is especially felt in countries where press freedom is already curtailed by governments.<sup>101</sup> Until now, RFA and VOA were the most accessible alternatives to state media for many people in countries such as China, North Korea, Myanmar and Vietnam, where governments continue to firewall their people from the global internet.<sup>102</sup> RFA has often been one of the few journalistic voices reporting on stifled stories: from air strikes in Myanmar, to state-linked corruption in Vietnam, to the killing of activists in Laos.<sup>103</sup> Its shutdown will have an immediate impact in places where governments employ authoritarian policies to maintain control over the news, where freedom of expression and the ability of a free press to dissent are suppressed, and where media outlets like VOA are the only avenues for listeners to tune into the outside world.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Washington Post, “Trump administration moves to cut programs that fight child labor abroad” (previously cited); The Guardian, “Trump cuts 69 global programs tackling child labor and human trafficking”, 27 March 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/27/trump-cuts-child-labor-human-trafficking-programs>.

<sup>96</sup> Washington Post, “Trump administration moves to cut programs that fight child labor abroad” (previously cited).

<sup>97</sup> Executive Order, Continuing the Reduction of Federal Bureaucracy, 14 March 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/continuing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy/>.

<sup>98</sup> White House, “The Voice of Radical America”, 15 March 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/03/the-voice-of-radical-america/>; BBC, “Trump moves to close down Voice of America”, 16 March, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cvge41109r3o>.

<sup>99</sup> Just Security, “Unpacking the Voice of America Litigation”, 10 April 2025, <https://www.justsecurity.org/109984/voice-of-america-litigation/>; CBS News, “Voice of America’s full-time staff and contractors placed on leave following Trump directive”, 17 March 2025, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-signs-order-to-cut-staff-at-voice-of-america-media/>

<sup>100</sup> Government Accountability Project, “The desk: judge sides with Voice of America journalists in lawsuits over firings”, 28 March 2025, <https://whistleblower.org/in-the-news/the-desk-judge-sides-with-voice-of-america-journalists-in-lawsuit-over-firings/>; Just Security, “Unpacking the Voice of America Litigation” (previously cited).

<sup>101</sup> Amnesty International, “Trump’s gutting of RFA hits press freedom – and helps its opponents – across Asia”, 31 March 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/03/trumps-gutting-of-rfa-hits-press-freedom-and-helps-its-opponents-across-asia/>.

<sup>102</sup> Amnesty International, “Trump’s gutting of RFA hits press freedom – and helps its opponents – across Asia” (previously cited).

<sup>103</sup> Amnesty International, “Trump’s gutting of RFA hits press freedom – and helps its opponents – across Asia” (previously cited).

<sup>104</sup> Amnesty International, “Trump’s gutting of RFA hits press freedom – and helps its opponents – across Asia” (previously cited).

## 4. THE HEALTH AND LIVES OF MILLIONS AT RISK

### 4.1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE RISKS TO THE RIGHTS TO HEALTH AND LIFE

Historically the US has contributed billions of dollars in foreign aid,<sup>105</sup> and in 2024 alone spent approximately US\$ 12 billion on health.<sup>106</sup> According to analysis of US foreign assistance data by the Pew Researcher Center, in 2023 approximately 22% of almost US\$ 72 billion spent in foreign aid was directed to health.<sup>107</sup> Most of the foreign aid for global health has been delivered through the Department of State, USAID, the National Institutes of Health (which conducts research), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (which focuses on disease prevention), as well as through contributions to multilateral organizations such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund), Gavi the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi), the World Health Organization (WHO), and UN agencies such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).<sup>108</sup>

Funding for HIV has generally accounted for about 50% of bilateral US global health funding.<sup>109</sup> According to UNAIDS, the US provided more than 70% of donor funding for HIV worldwide,<sup>110</sup> mostly through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and USAID. Funding for global health has also largely focused on vaccine preventable illnesses, TB, malaria, maternal and child health, and family planning and reproductive health.<sup>111</sup>

Analysis of the US foreign assistance budget shows that the United States provided health funding in almost 80 countries.<sup>112</sup> According to one recent estimate, between 2.3 and 5.6 million lives are saved a year from US investment in HIV prevention, vaccine preventable illnesses supported by Gavi, TB, malaria and humanitarian relief alone, excluding the vital support US aid provides to prevent health challenges such as maternal mortality, or polio – which leaves many permanently paralyzed.<sup>113</sup>

Abrupt cuts to foreign aid,<sup>114</sup> without enough time for countries to respond to this shift, stand to significantly disrupt HIV,<sup>115</sup> tuberculosis<sup>116</sup> and malaria<sup>117</sup> programs, and undermine vaccine-preventable diseases, including for children at risk.<sup>118</sup> The rapid dismantling of USAID, suspension of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR),<sup>119</sup> and potential cuts to multilateral agencies that deliver healthcare puts the lives and health of people across the globe at risk. Some highly aid dependent countries, such as Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Haiti, are expected to feel the

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<sup>105</sup> Foreign Assistance Gov, "Dashboard" (previously cited).

<sup>106</sup> Foreign Assistance Gov, "Dashboard" (previously cited).

<sup>107</sup> Pew Research Center, "What the data says about U.S. foreign aid" (previously cited).

<sup>108</sup> KFF, "10 Things to Know About U.S. Funding for Global Health", 4 February 2025, <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/issue-brief/10-things-to-know-about-u-s-funding-for-global-health/#program-details>.

<sup>109</sup> KFF, "10 Things to Know About U.S. Funding for Global Health" (previously cited).

<sup>110</sup> UNAIDS, "How the shift in US funding is threatening both the lives of people affected by HIV and the community groups supporting them", 18 February 2025, [https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/february/20250218\\_us-funding-people-affected-hiv-community-groups](https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/february/20250218_us-funding-people-affected-hiv-community-groups) (accessed 28 April 2025).

<sup>111</sup> Center for Global Development, "USAID Cuts: New Estimates at the Country Level", 26 March 2025, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/usaids-cuts-new-estimates-country-level>.

<sup>112</sup> KFF, "10 Things to Know About U.S. Funding for Global Health" (previously cited).

<sup>113</sup> Center for Global Development, "How Many Lives Does US Foreign Aid Save?", 15 March 2025, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/how-many-lives-does-us-foreign-aid-save>.

<sup>114</sup> New York Times "U.S. Terminates Funding for Polio, H.I.V., Malaria and Nutrition Programs Around the World", 27 February 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/27/health/usaids-contract-terminations.html>.

<sup>115</sup> UN News, "UN agency warns of 'surge' in AIDS deaths without US funding", 24 March 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/03/1161416n>.

<sup>116</sup> WHO, "Funding cuts impact access to TB services endangering millions of lives", 5 March 2025, <https://www.who.int/news/item/05-03-2025-funding-cuts-to-tuberculosis-programmes-endanger-millions-of-lives>.

<sup>117</sup> WHO, "Malaria progress in jeopardy amid foreign aid cuts", 11 April 2025, <https://www.who.int/news/item/11-04-2025-malaria-progress-in-jeopardy-amid-foreign-aid-cuts>.

<sup>118</sup> WHO, "Increases in vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks threaten years of progress, warn WHO, UNICEF, Gavi", 25 April 2025, <https://www.who.int/news/item/24-04-2025-increases-in-vaccine-preventable-disease-outbreaks-threaten-years-of-progress-warn-who-unicef-gavi>.

<sup>119</sup> Health Policy Watch, "PEPFAR Reauthorization Expires With No Clarity About Renewed US Funding for HIV", 25 March 2025, <https://healthpolicy-watch.news/pepfar-reauthorization-expires-with-no-clear-path-for-renewed-aid/>.

impacts soonest.<sup>120</sup> For countries where aid dependency is rooted in colonialism and historical injustices, the abrupt aid cuts only reinforce structural and historical inequalities. Such is the case in Haiti, where “independence debt” - the obligation to pay compensation for the loss of colonial profits from enslaved labour – political and economic decisions by other countries like the imposition of a trade embargo by the United States and France and the United States’ occupation of Haiti between 1915 to 1934<sup>121</sup> impacts on Haiti’s economy and in turn its ability to adequately invest in economic, social and cultural rights.<sup>122</sup>

In preparing this briefing, Amnesty International was able to gather preliminary information on the harms and risks linked to health funding cuts in several countries, where many implementing organizations received stop work orders and subsequently cuts to their programming. Many were left with contractual obligations for staff or rental agreements, or costs for work already delivered, and with limited reserves, were struggling to pay these. However, their main concern was the impending impacts for marginalized communities, including women, children, and key populations – such as men who have sex with men, transgender women, sex workers, and people who use drugs - who their projects had been serving.

By way of example, in the field of HIV, impacts resulting from the cuts are expected to be severe. According to the US Department of State, as of September 2023, PEPFAR had supported HIV treatment for nearly 20.5 million people worldwide, prevented millions of babies from acquiring HIV from their mothers, and provided support to hundreds of thousands of health workers.<sup>123</sup> However, UNAIDS has estimated that 6.3 million people stand to die in the next four years unless US aid is reinstated.<sup>124</sup> Experts in HIV are describing the likely impacts as “deadly”<sup>125</sup> or a “bloodbath”.<sup>126</sup> One study predicts that funding cuts by major international donors and discontinued PEPFAR support could lead to up to 3 million HIV-related deaths in low and middle-income countries between 2025 and 2030 alone, and 4 to 10 million new HIV infections in the same period, with greatest impacts in countries with a bigger percentage of international funding and increasing incidence of HIV in key populations.<sup>127</sup>

UNAIDS, which is also reportedly facing more than 50% cuts to its staff,<sup>128</sup> has published regular updates highlighting the impact of the funding cuts.<sup>129</sup> They have reported gaps in essential services such as testing for pregnant women, which is key to preventing mother-to-child transmission, harm reduction services that prevent HIV transmission for people who inject drugs and support them with psychosocial services, and cuts to projects focused on increasing access to healthcare for other key

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<sup>120</sup> Center for Global Development, “26 Countries Are Most Vulnerable to US Global Health Aid Cuts. Can Other Funders Bridge the Gap?”, 25 February 2025, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/26-countries-are-most-vulnerable-us-global-health-aid-cuts-can-other-funders-bridge-gap>.

<sup>121</sup> Donald R. Hickey, “America’s response to the slave revolt in Haiti, 1791-1806”, 1982, *Journal of the Early Republic*, Volume 2, Issue 4. Simon Henochsberg, “Public debt and slavery: the case of Haiti (1760-1915)”, 2016, Paris School of Economics. Douglas E. Matthews, “Economic sanctions and economic strategies: Toward Haiti’s integration into the world economy”, 1994, *St. Thomas Law Review*, Volume 6, Issue 281.

<sup>122</sup> Amnesty International, “Haiti: Activists and organizations from Haiti and its diaspora urge France to address its colonial past in Haiti on the bicentenary of the “independence debt””, 16 April 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr36/9258/2025/en/>.

<sup>123</sup> US State Department, “Results and Impact – PEPFAR”, <https://www.state.gov/results-and-impact-pepfar> (accessed 29 April 2025).

<sup>124</sup> UN News, “UN agency warns of ‘surge’ in AIDS deaths without US funding” (previously cited).

<sup>125</sup> Khai Hoan Tram and others, “By executive order: The likely deadly consequences associated with a 90-day pause in PEPFAR funding”, 20 February 2025, *Journal of the International AIDS Society*, 5, 28:e26431, <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/jia2.26431/full>.

<sup>126</sup> Science, “‘A bloodbath’: HIV field is reeling after billions in US funding are axed”, 28 February 2025, <https://www.science.org/content/article/bloodbath-hiv-field-reeling-after-billions-u-s-funding-axed>.

<sup>127</sup> Debra ten Brink and others, “Impact of an international HIV funding crisis on HIV infections and mortality in low-income and middle-income countries: a modelling study”, *The Lancet HIV*, Volume 0, Issue 0, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanhiv/article/PIIS2352-3018\(25\)00074-8/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanhiv/article/PIIS2352-3018(25)00074-8/abstract).

<sup>128</sup> DEVEX, “Exclusive: UNAIDS will lose more than 50% of staff in restructuring”, 6 May 2025, <https://www.devex.com/news/exclusive-unaids-will-lose-more-than-50-of-staff-in-restructuring-110000>.

<sup>129</sup> UNAIDS, “Impact of US funding cuts on global AIDS response”, [www.unaids.org/en/taxonomy/term/938](http://www.unaids.org/en/taxonomy/term/938) (accessed 29 April 2025).

populations<sup>130</sup> who face heightened risk for HIV due to intense stigma, discrimination and criminalization which push them underground and away from health services.

As of 31 March, US funding cuts have had “a seismic impact on HIV responses across East and Southern Africa”, with “thousands of health workers being retrenched, programs halted, reduced access to HIV prevention, unavailability of data system and other related services and the dismantling of community health systems,” according to UNAIDS.<sup>131</sup> PEPFAR contributed more than \$US 300 million for HIV prevention across 15 countries in the region and was the single biggest funder.<sup>132</sup> Countries such as Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique are almost entirely dependent on PEPFAR for HIV prevention work.<sup>133</sup> However, even in countries that pay for most of their HIV response, such as South Africa,<sup>134</sup> US aid cuts have had immediate impacts on the response to HIV, including for adolescents and children in disadvantaged households.

Beyond HIV, swift and widespread cuts to global health programs are having sweeping public health and ethical implications. One investigation by the New York Times (NYT), found that following stop work orders for US-financed research studies, people across the world were left abandoned in the middle of clinical trials with experimental devices or medicines in their bodies.<sup>135</sup>

The cuts are also generating concern that disease outbreaks could become more likely. According to a USAID memo obtained by the NYT, cuts to USAID programs across the world could lead to 166,000 more malaria deaths over a year, 200,000 paralytic polio cases a year, and in a worst case scenario more than 28,000 cases of diseases such as Ebola and Marburg per year.<sup>136</sup> Another investigation by the NYT found that the US administration may also cut funds to Gavi, an organization that provides life-saving vaccines for millions of children in developing countries.<sup>137</sup>

The WHO is also predicting disruption to progress in TB<sup>138</sup> and malaria prevention.<sup>139</sup> Recent reports indicate that reductions in international funding, particularly from USAID,<sup>140</sup> could severely impact TB prevention, testing, and treatment services. Research conducted by Amnesty International in 2021 highlighted how Indigenous San peoples are disproportionately affected by TB, facing socioeconomic factors that limit their access to adequate health services.<sup>141</sup> Funding cuts threaten to undo progress made in TB care, jeopardizing the health of such populations already in vulnerable situations.

Additionally, as part of aid cuts, the Trump administration has terminated the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), a household level survey which for decades has provided a key source of public health information in low- and middle-income countries, enabling governments to understand health needs related to issues such as HIV, gender-based violence, and maternal and children’s health.<sup>142</sup> Cuts to programs such as this, which were conducted mostly in a collaboration between USAID,

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<sup>130</sup> UNAIDS, “Impact of US funding cuts on the global AIDS response Weekly update – 17 March 2025”, [www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/20250317-USstop-sitrep.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/20250317-USstop-sitrep.pdf).

<sup>131</sup> UNAIDS, “Feature Story: Impact of US funding cuts on HIV programmes in East and Southern Africa”, 31 March 2025, [https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/march/20250331\\_ESA-region\\_fs](https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/march/20250331_ESA-region_fs).

<sup>132</sup> UNAIDS, “Feature Story: Impact of US funding cuts on HIV programmes in East and Southern Africa” (previously cited).

<sup>133</sup> UNAIDS, “Feature Story: Impact of US funding cuts on HIV programmes in East and Southern Africa” (previously cited).

<sup>134</sup> UNAIDS, “Feature Story: Impact of US funding cuts on HIV programmes in East and Southern Africa” (previously cited).

<sup>135</sup> The New York Times, “Abandoned in the Middle of Clinical Trials, Because of a Trump Order”, 6 February 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/06/health/usaids-clinical-trials-funding-trump.html>.

<sup>136</sup> The New York Times, “U.S.A.I.D. Memos Detail Human Costs of Cuts to Foreign Aid”, 2 March 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/02/health/usaids-cuts-deaths-infections.html>.

<sup>137</sup> The New York Times, “USA to End Vaccine Funds for Poor Countries”, 26 March 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/26/health/usaids-cuts-gavi-bird-flu.html>.

<sup>138</sup> WHO, “Funding cuts impact access to TB services endangering millions of lives” (previously cited).

<sup>139</sup> WHO, “Malaria progress in jeopardy amid foreign aid cuts” (previously cited).

<sup>140</sup> WHO, “Funding cuts impact access to TB services endangering millions of lives” (previously cited).

<sup>141</sup> Amnesty International, *Namibia: “We don’t feel well treated”: Tuberculosis and the Indigenous San peoples of Namibia* (Index: AFR 42/4784/2021), 6 October 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/af42/4784/2021/en/>.

<sup>142</sup> New York Times, “Trump Administration Ends Global Health Research Program”, 26 February 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/26/health/usaids-global-health-surveys.html>; Caren Grown, “An ode to the Demographic and Health Survey Program”, 6 March 2025, Brookings, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/an-ode-to-the-demographic-and-health-survey-program/>.

national governments and other funders, significantly limit available data that can be used for policy development and program planning and evaluation at the national and global level.<sup>143</sup>

According to initial information gathered by Amnesty International, funding cuts are already putting some of the world's most marginalized communities at greater risk in various countries across the world, impacting access to health services for girls, including survivors of sexual violence, and key populations in Guatemala, Haiti, and South Africa. The cuts also put children's health at camps in north-east Syria at risk, are limiting access to healthcare for refugees and internally displaced persons in South Sudan, and are having a devastating impact on women and girls in Yemen.

## 4.2 GUATEMALA

### CUTS TO PROJECTS FOR GIRL SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND KEY POPULATIONS

In 2023 and 2024, Guatemala ranked the third highest recipient of US foreign aid in the Western Hemisphere, and the US government provided funding for a range of health issues, including children's health and nutrition, and the response to HIV.<sup>144</sup> Since the 20 January Executive Order, civil society organizations in Guatemala have lost funding for a range of programs that facilitate access to healthcare for marginalized groups.

Sexual violence against girls is pervasive in Guatemala.<sup>145</sup> In January and February 2025 alone, 4,316 girls between ages 10 and 17 gave birth in Guatemala, where access to abortion is severely restricted, including for children.<sup>146</sup> One organization that supports girl survivors of sexual violence aged between 10 and 14 years old, who are forced to carry pregnancies to term following abuse, told Amnesty International that when stop work orders were issued in January, they lost funding for two contracts they were just about to sign for US funds that would have extended the reach of the project into new communities.<sup>147</sup>

The project facilitates access to medical, psychological, and legal support to help girl survivors of violence rebuild their lives after abuse. Additionally, in a context where 1 in 2 children also suffer from chronic malnutrition,<sup>148</sup> the project provides pregnant girl survivors of sexual violence with education and food packages of high nutritional value to support their nutrition, and that of their babies, to help them live healthy lives.

In relation to HIV services, according to UNAIDS, as of 14 March, while Global Fund-financed services have not been suspended, service delivery has been impacted in some clinics which received US support.<sup>149</sup> UNAIDS also noted concern about gaps in HIV prevention for key populations whose access to HIV testing and treatment services is facilitated by community outreach workers.<sup>150</sup> This concern was echoed by several NGO representatives and public health experts that Amnesty International spoke to who raised concern about potential impacts of the funding cuts for access to treatment for people living with HIV and HIV prevention services for marginalized and hard-to-reach groups.<sup>151</sup>

<sup>143</sup> New York Times, "Trump Administration Ends Global Health Research Program" (previously cited).

<sup>144</sup> Foreign Assistance "US Foreign Assistance by country – Guatemala", <https://foreignassistance.gov/cd/guatemala/2024/disbursements/0> (accessed 29 April 2025).

<sup>145</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Forced to Give Up on Their Dreams": Sexual Violence against Girls in Guatemala, 2025, [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media\\_2025/02/guatemala0225web\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2025/02/guatemala0225web_0.pdf).

<sup>146</sup> OSAR, "Infografía: Registro de nacimientos en niñas de 10-17 años y edad del padre. Enero y febrero del año 2025", <https://osarguatemala.org/infografia-registro-de-nacimientos-en-ninas-de-10-17-anos-y-edad-del-padre-enero-y-febrero-del-ano-2025/> (only available in Spanish).

<sup>147</sup> Interview by video call with NGO representative, 22 April 2025, and follow-up correspondence on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>148</sup> UNICEF "En Guatemala el 46,5% de los niños sufre desnutrición crónica", María Claudia Santizo, Oficial de Nutrición en UNICEF Guatemala", <https://www.unicef.es/noticia/en-guatemala-los-ninos-sufre-desnutricion-cronica-maria-claudia-santizo-oficial> (only available in Spanish).

<sup>149</sup> UNAIDS "Impact of US funding cuts on HIV programmes in Guatemala", 14 March 2025, [https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/march/20250314\\_Guatemala\\_fs](https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/march/20250314_Guatemala_fs).

<sup>150</sup> UNAIDS "Impact of US funding cuts on HIV programmes in Guatemala" (previously cited).

<sup>151</sup> Interviews by video call with experts and NGOs on 11 April 2025, 28 April 2025, 1 May 2025, and 12 May 2025.

## 4.3 HAITI

### HEALTH OF CHILD SURVIVORS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND LGBT PEOPLE AT RISK IN HAITI

After years of successive failed policies by the international community, Haiti is highly aid dependent, and in 2024 the US provided almost 60% of its humanitarian aid.<sup>152</sup> Since the assassination of Haiti's President Jovenel Moïse in 2021, violence by armed gangs has caused a humanitarian crisis and prompted the UN Security Council to authorize a multinational security support force.

According to UNAIDS, in Haiti foreign aid accounts for 97% of the funding for the AIDS response,<sup>153</sup> and the US funds 62% of HIV treatment.<sup>154</sup> As of 3 March 2025, 128 sites (out of 181 nationally) previously funded by PEPFAR had stopped working, severely impacting services for key populations and adolescent girls.<sup>155</sup>

As of 13 March 2025, UNAIDS reported that due to the US funding freeze, pre-exposure prophylaxis services were completely halted, except for pregnant and lactating women.<sup>156</sup> People living with HIV had also become mostly reliant on treatment that arrived on a humanitarian flight in February which was expected to last for approximately six months, but there were concerns about sustainability and access to treatment amid staff cuts.<sup>157</sup>

In February 2025, Amnesty International released a report documenting rape and other forms of sexual violence against children by gangs. In this context, children and other survivors of sexual violence need access to comprehensive post-rape services, including HIV treatment.<sup>158</sup>

Amnesty International spoke to the representative of an organization in Haiti that works with 8- to 15-year-old girls and 16- to 30-year-old young women to empower them with leadership skills.<sup>159</sup> One of their projects provides girl survivors of sexual violence with first-line psychological support and referrals to health services in the first 72 hours after violence. When the stop work orders were issued in January, the organization was on the verge of signing a contract to access US funding which would have supported this work. Since then, beyond losing funding for its psychologists, the organization told Amnesty International that many of the organizations that it refers children to for post-rape services, have also lost funding or shut down, leaving girls without the urgent health attention they need to prevent or treat HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and unplanned pregnancies following violence.

The US aid freeze has also had important impacts on LGBT people and their access to HIV services in Haiti. One organization, funded through PEPFAR, helped LGBT people living with HIV who had been displaced by gang violence to access HIV treatment sites after they had been forced to leave their homes and disconnected from their initial treatment centres.<sup>160</sup> However, following the funding freeze, this work has been stopped, and many of the staff trained through PEPFAR to provide friendly healthcare services for LGBT people and sex workers have been let go, leaving key populations without specialized healthcare and more exposed to stigma and discrimination,<sup>161</sup> a key barrier in access to services which undermines the HIV response.

<sup>152</sup> UNOCHA, "Haiti 2024", <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/96/summary/2024>.

<sup>153</sup> UNAIDS "Impact of US funding freeze on the global AIDS response Weekly update – week of 3 March 2025", [aids.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/20250305-USstop-Sitrep.pdf](https://aids.org/sites/default/files/2025-03/20250305-USstop-Sitrep.pdf).

<sup>154</sup> UNAIDS, "Impact of US funding freeze on the global AIDS response Weekly update – week of 24 February 2025", [aids.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/20250226-USfundingfreeze-sitrep-en.pdf](https://aids.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/20250226-USfundingfreeze-sitrep-en.pdf).

<sup>155</sup> UNAIDS, "Impact of US funding freeze on the global AIDS response, Weekly update – week of 3 March 2025" (previously cited).

<sup>156</sup> UNAIDS, "Feature Story, Impact of US funding freeze on HIV programmes in Haiti", 13 March 2025, [aids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/march/20250313\\_Haiti\\_fs](https://aids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/march/20250313_Haiti_fs)

<sup>157</sup> UNAIDS, "Feature Story, Impact of US funding freeze on HIV programmes in Haiti" (previously cited).

<sup>158</sup> Amnesty International, *Haiti: "I'm a Child, Why Did This Happen to Me?": Gangs' Assault on Childhood in Haiti* (Index: AMR 36/8875/2025), 12 February 2025, [www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr36/8875/2025/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr36/8875/2025/en/)

<sup>159</sup> Interview by video call with NGO representative, 7 May 2025.

<sup>160</sup> Information received from regional NGO on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>161</sup> Information received from regional NGO on file with Amnesty International.

## 4.4 SOUTH AFRICA

### WIDESPREAD IMPACTS ON HIV PROGRAMS FOR VULNERABLE CHILDREN AND KEY POPULATIONS

South Africa has the largest HIV epidemic in the world, with approximately 17% of people ages 15 to 49 living with HIV.<sup>162</sup> The US funding cuts have terminated funding for many organizations providing HIV services in the country,<sup>163</sup> and according to news reports, have ended significant US-funding for HIV and TB research at South African universities.<sup>164</sup>

In 2022, PEPFAR represented just 18% of South Africa's HIV budget, yet one study has estimated that eliminating PEPFAR could lead to more than 600,000 HIV-related deaths and more than half a million new infections in the country over 10 years.<sup>165</sup>

According to UNAIDS, because of US funding cuts, clinics for key populations have closed,<sup>166</sup> curtailing vital interventions to stem HIV transmission. Multiple news reports have highlighted how programs providing rape survivors with counselling and HIV preventative treatment have either been closed or reduced services, leaving survivors without care and frontline staff without jobs.<sup>167</sup>

In South Africa, US assistance has provided critical support to community organizations working to ensure that people living with HIV know their status and adhere to treatment. Amnesty International interviewed a representative of one such organization that, through coordination with dozens of community partners, reaches adolescent girls at heightened risk for HIV, as well as orphans and vulnerable children in disadvantaged households.<sup>168</sup> One of their programs identified children likely to be living with HIV and supported them to get tested and initiated on treatment so they could live healthy lives. Working at the household level, the organization provided a holistic package of support to keep children safe and healthy, including referrals to gender-based violence services and broader health care. After receiving the initial stop-work orders in January, the organization applied for waivers to avoid any interruption in treatment for the children they support. However, after receiving no response, the program was eventually terminated in March.

While the representative who spoke to Amnesty International acknowledged that gradually transitioning away from PEPFAR funding is a reasonable long-term goal, they expressed concern about the abrupt nature of the cuts. They said: "There's been a lot of investment in the last 20 years to get us to where we are at... The concern is that the abrupt end is actually going to change that or reverse the trajectory of the progress made... It almost feels like the resources that were invested were actually wasted because of this abrupt termination".<sup>169</sup>

Another NGO representative told Amnesty International that while the South African government funds (most) HIV treatment, the US had supported access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) – highly effective drugs that can prevent people at higher risk from acquiring HIV. Following the cuts to US aid, access to PrEP through specialized services for sex workers, transgender women, and people who use drugs has been interrupted. They said: "We understand the U.S. government was helping low- and middle-income countries out of

<sup>162</sup> UNAIDS, "South Africa: Data", <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/southafrica> (accessed 1 May 2025).

<sup>163</sup> UNAIDS, "Impact of US funding cuts on HIV programmes in South Africa", 22 April 2025, [https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/april/20250422\\_southafrica](https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2025/april/20250422_southafrica); Bhekisisa, "Trump: 'Thank you for partnering with USAID and God bless America.'", 27 February 2025, <https://bhekisisa.org/health-news-south-africa/2025-02-27-breaking-trump-orders-usaid-funded-hiv-organisations-in-sa-to-shut-down/>.

<sup>164</sup> News24, "UPDATE: Cancellation letters roll in: Trump ends SA's HIV and TB research grants", 22 March 2025, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/cancellation-letters-roll-in-trump-ends-sas-hiv-and-tb-research-grants-20250322>.

<sup>165</sup> Aditya R. Gandhi, MD and others, "Potential Clinical and Economic Impacts of Cutbacks in the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief Program in South Africa: A Modeling Analysis", 11 February 2025, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/ANNALS-24-01104>; Stat News, "We tried to quantify the impact of abrupt PEPFAR cuts. The results startled even us, These policy decisions put lives at risk", 1 March 2025, <https://www.statnews.com/2025/03/01/pepfar-usaid-funding-cuts-trump-hiv-aids/>.

<sup>166</sup> UNAIDS, "Impact of US funding cuts on HIV programmes in South Africa" (previously cited).

<sup>167</sup> Al Jazeera, "How US funding cuts are threatening South African families living with HIV", 11 April 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/4/11/how-us-funding-cuts-are-threatening-south-african-families-living-with-hiv>; Channel 4 News, "USAID – severity and speed of cuts causing despair in South Africa", 3 May 2025, <https://www.channel4.com/news/usaid-severity-and-speed-of-cuts-causing-despair-in-south-africa>.

<sup>168</sup> Interview by video call with NGO representative, 30 April 2025.

<sup>169</sup> Interview by video call with NGO representative, 30 April 2025.

goodwill, and we truly appreciate the lives saved through PEPFAR funding. However, the fight against HIV is not yet over. Funding cuts will not only reverse the achievements of the past 20 years but also lead to more pain and preventable deaths”.<sup>170</sup>

## 4.5 SYRIA

### CHILDREN'S HEALTH AT RISK IN CAMP IN NORTH-EAST SYRIA

Following the territorial defeat of the Islamic State (IS) armed group in Syria in 2019, tens of thousands of men, women, and children have been indefinitely and arbitrarily detained for their perceived affiliation to the group by the Autonomous Authorities of the North and East Syria Region (autonomous authorities), with the support of the US-led coalition to defeat IS. As documented in an Amnesty International report released in April 2024,<sup>171</sup> these individuals have been held in horrific conditions in over two dozen detention facilities and in Al-Hol and Roj detention camps in north-east Syria.

Al-Hol camp is made up of approximately 36,000 people, the majority of whom are children.<sup>172</sup> The camp is locked, meaning those held there cannot leave without the approval of the security forces guarding the camp. In practice, camp residents leave only in very rare circumstances, such as in medical emergencies.

When Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced stop-work orders, a number of critical services in Al-Hol were temporarily suspended, prompting chaos in the camp.<sup>173</sup> Soon after the announcement, the aid group Un Ponte Per closed one of its two primary care clinics and reduced its emergency ambulance services.<sup>174</sup> The autonomous authorities reported that the Kurdish Red Crescent had reduced its staff in the camp and stopped operating the medical waste incinerator.<sup>175</sup>

At the time, the Al-Hol camp manager, Jihan Hanan, reflected, “We are mostly worried about the health sector. For example, if there is any heart attack, they [the camp residents] will die in the camp because there are no ambulances and no equipment. . . [there is] no referral process to take them outside”.<sup>176</sup>

The loss of these types of services could have far-reaching consequences on the safety, security, and wellbeing of camp residents.<sup>177</sup>

## 4.6 YEMEN

### DEVASTATING IMPACTS ON WOMEN AND GIRLS IN YEMEN

In March, Amnesty International interviewed 10 humanitarian experts and aid workers with direct knowledge of the situation on the ground in Yemen, and six representatives of local human rights organizations, five of

<sup>170</sup> Email to Amnesty International with NGO, 2 May 2025, on file with Amnesty International.

<sup>171</sup> Amnesty International, *Syria: Aftermath: Injustice, torture and death in detention in north-east Syria* (Index: MDE 24/7752/2024), 17 April 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/mde24/7752/2024/en/>.

<sup>172</sup> Data received from Al-Hol camp manager, on file at Amnesty International.

<sup>173</sup> Amnesty International “Syria: New urgency to end unlawful detention system holding tens of thousands of people following Islamic State defeat”, 20 May 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/05/syria-new-urgency-to-end-unlawful-detention-system-holding-tens-of-thousands-of-people-following-islamic-state-defeat/>

<sup>174</sup> Three interviews by voice call, March 2025; The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, “ISIS Suspects Held in Syria: Repatriation Reset under New US, Syrian Leaders?”, 18 March 2025, <https://icct.nl/publication/isis-suspects-held-syria-repatriation-reset-under-new-us-syrian-leaders>.

<sup>175</sup> Report on file at Amnesty International.

<sup>176</sup> Interview by voice call with Jihan Hanan, Al-Hol camp manager, 13 March 2025.

<sup>177</sup> For further information about the impact of the funding cuts in Al-Hol camp, see Amnesty International “Syria: New urgency to end unlawful detention system holding tens of thousands of people following Islamic State defeat” (previously cited).

which provide direct services to populations already in vulnerable situations, all of whom said the impact of the cuts will be devastating, leading to suffering, death and more instability for an already fragile country.<sup>178</sup>

Aid workers described to Amnesty International how President Donald Trump's decision to cut US aid funding has led to the shut-down of lifesaving assistance and protection services, including malnutrition treatment to children, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, safe shelters to survivors of gender-based violence, and healthcare to children suffering from cholera and other illnesses.<sup>179</sup>

According to experts and aid workers interviewed by Amnesty International, by March 2025, the US aid funding cuts had already forced the shutdown of dozens of safe spaces—designed to prevent or respond to gender-based violence—for women and girls across Yemen. They warned that if funding was not restored, dozens of health facilities and reproductive health and protection clinics would shut down, denying hundreds of thousands of women and girls, including survivors of gender-based violence, access to life-saving healthcare, psychosocial support and legal aid.

Women and girls across Yemen have long faced systemic discrimination and gender-based violence.<sup>180</sup> Yemen has no legal minimum age of marriage, and almost one third of women are married before the age of 18. Child marriage is associated with a lifetime of human rights harms. Yemen also has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the Middle East and North Africa, with nearly 200 women dying for every 100,000 births, according to UNFPA.

A representative of a local organization that provides a range of services to survivors of gender-based violence, including safe shelter, legal aid, and psychosocial support, said the US aid cuts had severely impacted more than half of their programs.<sup>181</sup> She told Amnesty International: “Hundreds of women will be impacted... We are no longer providing psychological support, which is a crucial service for women survivors of gender-based violence. Legal aid counselling will also stop”.

When survivors of gender-based violence lose access to shelters, psychosocial support, referrals to health centres, legal aid and other critical services, they face life-threatening consequences. Funding cuts risk dismantling the existing network of protection and support that has been built over years by Yemeni women human rights defenders and humanitarian organizations, which in turn makes girls increasingly vulnerable, including to child marriage, human trafficking, and child labour.

## 4.7 SOUTH SUDAN

### IMPACTS ACROSS THE HEALTH SECTOR IN AID DEPENDENT SOUTH SUDAN

As one of the most aid dependent countries in Africa, South Sudan is one of the countries most affected by cuts to US funding. According to the Center for Global Development, thirty six percent of South Sudan's official development assistance comes from USAID,<sup>182</sup> and if the US funding freeze continued for a year, the country would face a 9% reduction in its GNI.<sup>183</sup> This decline in revenue would undermine South Sudan's ability to plug

<sup>178</sup> Amnesty International “Yemen: US abrupt and irresponsible aid cuts compound humanitarian crisis and put millions at risk”, 10 April 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/yemen-us-abrupt-and-irresponsible-aid-cuts-compound-humanitarian-crisis-and-put-millions-at-risk/>

<sup>179</sup> The manner in which the US State Department designated the Huthis a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) has further compounded the humanitarian situation in Yemen. The difficulty for aid organizations to certify compliance with the designation in the complex humanitarian environment in northern Yemen - where the majority of civilians in critical need of aid live- forced several international humanitarian organizations to suspend operations in Huthi-controlled territories. For further information, see Amnesty International “Yemen: US abrupt and irresponsible aid cuts compound humanitarian crisis and put millions at risk”.

<sup>180</sup> Amnesty International, “Yemen: Authorities and Meta must address online gender-based violence”, 5 November 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/yemen-authorities-and-meta-must-address-online-gender-based-violence/>.

<sup>181</sup> Interview by voice call with a representative of a local NGO, 10 March 2025.

<sup>182</sup> Center for Global Development, “Which Countries Are Most Exposed to US Aid Cuts; And What Other Providers Can Do”, 11 February 2025, <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/which-countries-are-most-exposed-us-aid-cuts-and-what-other-providers-can-do>.

<sup>183</sup> Center for Global Development, “Which Countries Are Most Exposed to US Aid Cuts; And What Other Providers Can Do” (previously cited).

the aid deficit needed to redress the health challenges emerging from the cuts as well as their ability to spend money on social programs generally.

In South Sudan, 1.8 million people are internally displaced,<sup>184</sup> and in a population of around 11 million, over seven million people are acutely food insecure, and one in four children are malnourished according to the World Food Program.<sup>185</sup> In most camps for people displaced by conflict, drought, and flooding, people rely on US financing either directly or indirectly through other humanitarian actors.

In April, Amnesty International interviewed three aid workers who worked with Sudanese and Ethiopian refugees within South Sudan as well as with internally displaced persons. All said that projects providing a range of health services for tens of thousands of patients, including rehabilitation services for victims of armed conflict, clinical services for victims of gender-based violence, psychological support for rape survivors, and emergency nutritional support for children, had been interrupted or stopped. Aid workers expressed concern that health clinics were shutting down, leaving them with few places to refer people who often travel long distances for support. In April, Al Jazeera reported that eight people, including five children, had died in the state of Jonglei, after walking for hours in the heat trying to seek medical care for cholera after a USAID-funded patient transport service shut down and clinics closed due to the cuts.<sup>186</sup>

Two of the humanitarian workers said they had been told by US funders to retain only life-saving projects. One aid worker explained that they had recently received a patient with epilepsy and another with TB but because of clinic closures had nowhere to refer them besides an overcrowded hospital. One told Amnesty International that people are struggling to stay on long-term medicines for conditions like HIV and are resorting to herbal medicines. Another aid worker mentioned outbreaks of cholera, increasing malaria, and snakebites occasioned by floods which were creating additional health needs that they were stretched to attend.

## 5. PEOPLE FLEEING HOME IN SEARCH OF SAFETY FACE COMPOUNDED RISK

### 5.1 AN OVERVIEW OF IMPACTS ON MIGRANTS, PEOPLE SEEKING SAFETY AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), at the end of June 2024, 122.6 million people worldwide remained forcibly displaced from their homes as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order – representing an increase of 5%, or 5.3 million people, compared to the end of 2023.<sup>187</sup> The majority of refugees (71%) are hosted in low and middle-income countries.<sup>188</sup>

<sup>184</sup> OCHA, “South Sudan: Humanitarian Snapshot”, March 2025, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-snapshot-march-2025> (accessed 15 May 2025).

<sup>185</sup> World Food Program “South Sudan”, <https://www.wfp.org/countries/south-sudan> (accessed 1 May 2025).

<sup>186</sup> Al Jazeera, “South Sudanese children die as US aid cuts shutter medical services: NGO”, 9 April 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/4/9/us-aid-cuts-leave-south-sudan-children-dead-as-medical-services-collapse>.

<sup>187</sup> UNHCR, Mid-Year Trends 2024, 9 October 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/mid-year-trends-report-2024>, p. 2; UNHCR, “Refugee Data Finder – Data Summaries, Global Overview”, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/data-summaries>. Of the 122.6 million forcibly displaced individuals, there are approximately 32 million refugees under UNHCR’s mandate, 6 million Palestinian refugees under UNRWA’s mandate, 72.1 million internally displaced persons, 8 million asylum seekers and 5.8 million other people in need of international protection.

<sup>188</sup> UNHCR, Mid-Year Trends 2024 (previously cited), p. 2; UNHCR, “Refugee Data Finder – Key facts for countries hosting the world’s refugees”, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/insights/explainers/refugee-hosting-metrics.html>.

According to publicly available information, approximately US\$ 2.3 billion in migration and asylum-related awards and grants from USAID and the US Department of State have been terminated as a result of the “Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid” executive order.<sup>189</sup>

According to initial information Amnesty International was able to gather, funding cuts to national and international organizations, shelters and groups that provide essential services for migrants, particularly those in a precarious situation, refugees, people seeking asylum and internally displaced persons have been widespread and devastating. A March 2025 study by ICVA found that “services essential for displaced populations, such as camp management, water trucking, healthcare, and education are being severely disrupted, impacting both emergency responses and long-term assistance in protracted crises”.<sup>190</sup>

In 2024, UNHCR received 40% of its total budget from the United States.<sup>191</sup> When the cuts were announced, Filippo Grandi, the head of UNHCR, stated that the “brutal funding cuts in the humanitarian sector are putting millions of lives at risk” and “the consequences for people fleeing danger will be immediate and devastating: refugee women and girls at extreme risk of rape and other abuse are already losing access to services that kept them safe; children are being left without teachers or schools, pushing them into child labour, trafficking, or early marriage; refugee communities will have less shelter, water and food”.<sup>192</sup> The agency has noted the disproportionate and severe impacts of the cuts on displaced women and girls. Programs providing psychological support, legal assistance and medical care have been suspended in countries around the world, including Ethiopia, Jordan and South Sudan.<sup>193</sup>

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) experienced a 30% reduction in estimated donor funding for 2025 following the suspension of US foreign assistance, which has resulted in it scaling back or ending projects affecting over 6,000 staff members worldwide.<sup>194</sup>

When the funding cuts were announced, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) was forced to suspend US-funded humanitarian work in nearly 20 countries, noting that “In our 79-year history, [we] have never experienced such an abrupt discontinuation of aid funding from any of our major donor nations, inter-governmental organizations, or private donor agencies”.<sup>195</sup> In 2024, just under 20% (US\$ 150 million) of NRC’s funding came from the United States and the organization assisted 1.6 million people globally through US-funded programs.<sup>196</sup> The immediate impacts of the funding cuts on NRC’s operations included being forced to halt the distribution of emergency support, including food and gasoline, to 57,000 people in Ukraine.<sup>197</sup> At the same time, as a result of the US’s failure to reimburse approximately US\$ 20 million to NRC for completed and ongoing authorized work, the organization was forced to suspend US-funded programming, including lifesaving programmes for which it had received waivers to continue implementing during the US government’s 90-day foreign assistance review.<sup>198</sup> This temporarily impacted support to 700 bakeries providing affordable daily bread in Darfur, Sudan; ending water and sanitation support to 100,000 people in Sudan and the

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<sup>189</sup> Migration Policy Institute, “Can Innovation Help Blunt the Impact of Foreign Aid Cuts on Migration Management Programs?”, April 2025, <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/foreign-aid-cuts-migration-management>.

<sup>190</sup> International Coalition of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), *Lives on the Line* (previously cited), p. 4.

<sup>191</sup> W Radio, “Criminalizar a los refugiados y la migración no tiene fundamento: Giovanni Lepri”, 22 April 2025, <https://wradio.com.mx/2025/04/22/criminalizar-a-los-refugiados-y-la-migracion-no-tiene-fundamento-giovanni-lepri/> (only available in Spanish).

<sup>192</sup> UNHCR, “Statement by UNHCR’s Filippo Grandi on the impact of global aid cuts on refugees”, 20 March 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/statement-unhcr-s-filippo-grandi-impact-global-aid-cuts-refugees>; UNHCR, “Amid funding crunch, UNHCR issues urgent call to protect women and girls from surging violence”, 7 March 2025, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/press-releases/amid-funding-crunch-unhcr-issues-urgent-call-protect-women-and-girls-surg-ing>.

<sup>193</sup> UNHCR, “Amid funding crunch, UNHCR issues urgent call to protect women and girls from surging violence” (previously cited).

<sup>194</sup> IOM, “Update on IOM Operations Amid Budget Cuts”, 18 March 2025, <http://www.iom.int/news/update-iom-operations-amid-budget-cuts>.

<sup>195</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, “NRC forced to suspend essential aid for 100,000s”, 10 February 2025, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2025/february/nrc-forced-to-suspend-essential-aid-work-in-almost-20-countries>.

<sup>196</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, “NRC forced to suspend essential aid for 100,000s” (previously cited).

<sup>197</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, “NRC forced to suspend essential aid for 100,000s” (previously cited).

<sup>198</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, “NRC forced to suspend even lifesaving US-funded aid this week”, 25 February 2025, <https://www.nrc.no/news/2025/february/nrc-forced-to-suspend-even-lifesaving-us-funded-aid-this-week>.

Democratic Republic of the Congo during persistent cholera outbreaks; and, ending the provision of food, water, shelter and other basic items to people displaced in northeast Colombia.<sup>199</sup> After months of disruption, by April 2025 the US had restored most of NRC's awards that originally received lifesaving waivers and then were subsequently terminated, allowing implementation to resume on 13 of its 29 humanitarian projects. While NRC also began receiving some sporadic back payments in April for work completed in 2024, the organization is still owed millions.

Similarly, as a result of funding cuts to the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the organization estimated that over two million people were at risk of losing access to essential, life-saving services, including food assistance and shelter.<sup>200</sup> The United States was DRC's second-largest donor contributing 20% of the organization's budget for 2025. Services that DRC has been forced to suspend include food assistance and daily malnutrition treatment for thousands of children and families in Cameroon and Nigeria; as well as the maintenance of the critical infrastructure of 10 camps that house almost 180,000 internally displaced people.<sup>201</sup> Moreover, as a result of suspension of foreign assistance, DRC has estimated that it will have to terminate approximately 2,000 staff positions in 21 countries.<sup>202</sup>

On 4 February 2025, President Trump issued an executive order prohibiting US funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).<sup>203</sup> UNRWA is the backbone of the humanitarian response for millions of Palestinian refugees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, as well as neighbouring Arab countries, providing indispensable food, water, medical aid, shelter, education and employment opportunities.<sup>204</sup> Particularly crucial is UNRWA's work in Gaza where nearly 75% of the population rely on assistance from the organization amidst an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. Moreover, since 2021, USAID had invested over US\$ 600 million in economic support and over US\$ 2.1 billion in humanitarian assistance in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.<sup>205</sup> While the agency had committed to providing US\$ 230 million in additional funding for development programs and economic recovery in November 2024, this funding has been severely impacted through the termination of USAID awards.<sup>206</sup>

While funding cuts to UN agencies and international non-governmental organizations have been severe, local and national organizations, and shelters, have been hit the hardest. This is because they are typically dependent on funding from UN agencies and international NGOs and have limited or no other sources of funding and limited reserves.<sup>207</sup>

People seeking asylum, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants, particularly those in a precarious situation, face compounded risks as a result of the cuts to foreign assistance given that these come at the same time that the United States is taking measures to dismantle the US asylum

<sup>199</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council, "NRC forced to suspend even lifesaving US-funded aid this week", (previously cited).

<sup>200</sup> Danish Refugee Council, "Humanitarian aid for over 2 million people at risk as Danish Refugee Council faces suspension of USA funding", 12 February 2025, <https://drc.ngo/resources/news/humanitarian-aid-for-over-2-million-people-at-risk-as-danish-refugee-council-faces-suspension-of-u-s-funding/>.

<sup>201</sup> Danish Refugee Council, "Humanitarian aid for over 2 million people at risk as Danish Refugee Council faces suspension of USA funding" (previously cited).

<sup>202</sup> Danish Refugee Council, "Statement from the Secretary General, Charlotte Slente, following US termination of nearly all its funded aid programs" (previously cited).

<sup>203</sup> Executive Order, Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to all International Organizations (previously cited).

<sup>204</sup> UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/>; Amnesty International, "Continuing to Block Funding for Palestinian Refugees is Cruel and Unconscionable", 4 February 2025, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/continuing-to-block-funding-for-palestinian-refugees-is-cruel-and-unconscionable/>; Amnesty International, *USA: Chaos & cruelty* (previously cited), p. 7.

<sup>205</sup> U.S. Office of Palestinian Affairs, "USAID Provides \$230 Million in New Funding to Support the Palestinian People", 18 November 2024, <https://palestinianaffairs.state.gov/usa-aid-provides-230-million-in-new-funding-to-support-the-palestinian-people/>.

<sup>206</sup> U.S. Office of Palestinian Affairs, "USAID Provides \$230 Million in New Funding to Support the Palestinian People" (previously cited); Center for Global Development, "The USAID Cuts: Little Sign of Mercy for 'Life-Saving' Health Programs" (previously cited); NBC News, "USAID freeze risks 'deadly consequences' as work halts in Gaza, agencies warn", 8 February 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/usa-aid-freeze-risks-deadly-consequences-work-halts-gaza-agencies-warn-rcna190553>.

<sup>207</sup> Accountability Lab, Global Aid Freeze Tracker, <http://www.globalaidfreeze.com/> (accessed 19 May 2025); International Coalition of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), *Lives on the Line* (previously cited), pp. 28-29.

system, protection programs and migration pathways.<sup>208</sup> For example, following a series of executive orders and the cancellation of the CBP One mobile application, there is currently no way to seek asylum at the US-Mexico border.<sup>209</sup> This has resulted in thousands of individuals finding themselves stranded in Mexico and other countries throughout the Americas, and at the same time, the essential services that they rely on, which are now more important than ever, have been defunded.<sup>210</sup> The suspension of USRAP, compounded by the termination of US foreign assistance, means that refugees with significant protection needs, who would have been resettled to the United States, are now stuck in places where services that would have supported them in the past no longer exist because of the cuts.<sup>211</sup> In the first half of 2024, the United States received over half (46,500) of the approximately 85,000 refugees that had been resettled to 22 countries; however, the 85,000 resettled individuals represented only 4% of UNHCR's estimate of the 2.4 million people in need of resettlement globally.<sup>212</sup> Litigation on the suspension of USRAP is ongoing.<sup>213</sup>

## 5.2 AFGHANISTAN

### SEVERE AID CUTS PUT INTERNALLY DISPLACED AFGHANS AT RISK

In 2024, the United States contributed 43.9% of humanitarian funding in Afghanistan.<sup>214</sup> The termination of US foreign assistance has had severe impacts on those internally displaced in the country, with disproportionate impacts on women and girls, and those living in rural, remote and historically underserved areas.<sup>215</sup> According to the United Nations Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 12 out of 23 community resources centers, which provided approximately 120,000 returning and internally displaced Afghans with housing, food assistance, legal assistance and referrals to healthcare providers, have been shut down.<sup>216</sup> The International Rescue Committee (IRC) was forced to suspend protection services, clean water and healthcare to over 700,000 people, including refugees and internally displaced families.<sup>217</sup> DRC was forced to halt water supply projects impacting thousands of people.<sup>218</sup> According to ACAPS, “the funding

<sup>208</sup> Presidential Proclamation, Declaring a National Emergency at the Southern Border of the United States, 20 January 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/declaring-a-national-emergency-at-the-southern-border-of-the-united-states/>; Presidential Proclamation, Guaranteeing the States Protection against Invasion, 20 January 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/guaranteeing-the-states-protection-against-invasion/>; Executive Action, Securing our Borders, 20 January 2025, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/securing-our-borders/>.

<sup>209</sup> Amnesty International, *USA: Lives in Limbo: Devastating impacts of Trump's migration and asylum policies* (Index: AMR 51/9029/2025) 20 February 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr51/9029/2025/en/>, pp. 4-5, 8-9.

<sup>210</sup> Amnesty International, *USA: Lives in Limbo* (previously cited).

<sup>211</sup> Executive Order, Realigning the United States Refugee Admissions Program (previously cited); Amnesty International, “Amnesty International USA Reaction to President Trump's Anti-Immigrant Executive Actions” (previously cited); IRC, “IRC Responds to Termination of State Department Grants for the Refugee Resettlement Program”, 28 February 2025, <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/irc-responds-termination-state-department-grants-refugee-resettlement-program>; International Coalition of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), *Lives on the Line* (previously cited), pp. 17 & 19; CWS, “Daily State of Play: Trump's Indefinite Refugee Ban and Funding Halt”, 16 May 2025, <https://cwsglobal.org/blog/daily-state-of-play-trumps-indefinite-refugee-ban-and-funding-halt/>.

<sup>212</sup> UNHCR, *Mid-Year Trends 2024* (previously cited), p. 27.

<sup>213</sup> US District Court, Western District of Washington at Seattle, *Pacito v. Trump*, Compliance Framework Order, 5 May 2025, <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.wawd.344495/gov.uscourts.wawd.344495.119.0.pdf>; IRAP, “Pacito v. Trump: Challenging Trump's suspension of USRAP”, <https://refugeerights.org/news-resources/pacito-v-trump-challenging-trumps-suspension-of-usrap>; AP, “Judge orders Trump administration to admit roughly 12,000 refugees”, 5 May 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-refugee-admissions-suspension-ruling-aa8d219b8ad771eb6c034c45476a7ab3>.

<sup>214</sup> OCHA, “Afghanistan 2024”, <https://fts.unocha.org/countries/1/summary/2024>.

<sup>215</sup> OCHA, “Afghanistan: Impact of US Funding Suspension on the Humanitarian Response”, 7 March 2025, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-impact-us-funding-suspension-humanitarian-response-07-mar-2025>; OCHA, “Afghanistan: Impact of US Funding Suspension on the Humanitarian Response”, 22 April 2025, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-impact-us-funding-suspension-humanitarian-response-22-apr-2025>.

<sup>216</sup> OCHA, “Afghanistan: Impact of US Funding Suspension on the Humanitarian Response”, 22 April 2025 (previously cited); UNRIC, “Norwegian Refugee Council: Crippling aid cuts threaten lives in Afghanistan”, 25 March 2025, <https://unric.org/en/norwegian-refugee-council-crippling-aid-cuts-threaten-lives-in-afghanistan/>.

<sup>217</sup> IRC, “U.S. aid cuts are impacting millions of Afghans”, 25 April 2025, <https://www.rescue.org/article/us-aid-cuts-are-impacting-millions-afghans#:~:text=Cuts%20to%20U.S.%20aid%20for,of%20hunger%2C%20illness%20and%20displacement..>

<sup>218</sup> Danish Refugee Council, “Statement from the Secretary General, Charlotte Slente, following US termination of nearly all its funded aid programs”, 27 February 2025, [drc.ngo/resources/news/statement-from-the-secretary-general-charlotte-slente-following-us-termination-of-nearly-all-its-funded-aid-programs/](https://drc.ngo/resources/news/statement-from-the-secretary-general-charlotte-slente-following-us-termination-of-nearly-all-its-funded-aid-programs/).

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freeze and subsequent cuts will likely result in an enormous increase in humanitarian needs, especially regarding livelihoods, food security, health and nutrition”.<sup>219</sup>

Both national and international organizations operating in the country have had to close offices and lay off staff.<sup>220</sup> According to a survey conducted by OCHA, national NGOs have been the hardest hit.<sup>221</sup> Staffing losses have had disproportionate impacts on female Afghan staff who have now lost their livelihoods and access to services.<sup>222</sup>

## 5.3 COSTA RICA

### CUTS STRAIN PROVISION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES PLACING FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE AT RISK

Since 2018, Costa Rica has been the main host country for people forcibly displaced from Nicaragua.<sup>223</sup> According to UNHCR, as of March 2025, Costa Rica hosted more than 194,000 Nicaraguan asylum seekers and 9,216 recognized refugees – accounting for more than half of all forcibly displaced Nicaraguans worldwide.<sup>224</sup> Costa Rica has also served as a transit country for large movements of migrants and people seeking safety who, over the past few years, arrived in the country after crossing through the Darien region between Panama and Colombia, and were on their way to the United States.<sup>225</sup> However, as a result of the Trump administration’s migration and asylum policies, particularly the end of asylum at the US-Mexico border, Costa Rica is now receiving large numbers of people who were waiting in Mexico to enter the United States and have now been forced to return south.

A 41% funding cut is seriously impacting the ability of UNCHR to provide humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum seekers in Costa Rica, as well as support to the country’s asylum system.<sup>226</sup> According to the organization, “Over the past years, humanitarian aid – including crucial financial assistance that has supported integration – has enabled thousands of Nicaraguans in Costa Rica to access legal support, navigate asylum procedures, and pursue other legal pathways. It has also provided vital services such as child protection, mental health care, education, and job training and placement with a particular focus on women, children, and those living in high-risk or remote areas ... However, this lifeline is now in jeopardy. A sharp reduction in funding has already forced the suspension or drastic cuts of many essential services”.<sup>227</sup> As a result of the funding cuts, the capacity to register newly arrived people seeking asylum has dropped by 77%, which is causing delays in people’s ability to access the documentation they need for education, healthcare and employment.<sup>228</sup>

At the same time, local organizations that provide essential services to people seeking asylum, refugees and migrants, including food assistance, shelter, educational services and psychosocial support, told Amnesty International that they have been forced to scale back their operations as a result of the funding cuts.<sup>229</sup> They indicated that many of the people who were waiting to enter the US and are returning south have extremely limited resources (having used all of their resources to arrive to the US-Mexico border) and are now more reliant on organizations for support and assistance. The cuts have forced larger organizations to close their operations in certain parts of the country, including along the border between Costa Rica and Nicaragua,

<sup>219</sup> ACAPS, “Afghanistan: Implications of the US foreign aid cuts on the humanitarian response”, 1 April 2025, [https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data\\_Product/Main\\_media/20250401\\_ACAPS\\_Thematic\\_report\\_Afghanistan\\_Implications\\_of\\_the\\_US\\_foreign\\_aid\\_cuts\\_on\\_humanitarian\\_response.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20250401_ACAPS_Thematic_report_Afghanistan_Implications_of_the_US_foreign_aid_cuts_on_humanitarian_response.pdf), p. 3.

<sup>220</sup> UNRIC, “Norwegian Refugee Council: Crippling aid cuts threaten lives in Afghanistan” (previously cited).

<sup>221</sup> OCHA, “Afghanistan: Impact of US Funding Suspension on the Humanitarian Response”, 22 April 2025 (previously cited).

<sup>222</sup> ACAPS, “Afghanistan: Implications of the US foreign aid cuts on the humanitarian response” (previously cited), p. 6.

<sup>223</sup> UNHCR, “Costa Rica: Factsheet, December 2024”, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/costa-rica-factsheet-10021>.

<sup>224</sup> UNHCR, “Costa Rica’s solidarity with refugees threatened by major funding cuts, warns UNHCR”, 9 May 2025, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/costa-rica-s-solidarity-refugees-threatened-major-funding-cuts-warns-unhcr>.

<sup>225</sup> UNHCR, “Costa Rica: Factsheet, December 2024” (previously cited).

<sup>226</sup> UNHCR, “Costa Rica’s solidarity with refugees threatened by major funding cuts, warns UNHCR” (previously cited).

<sup>227</sup> UNHCR, “Costa Rica’s solidarity with refugees threatened by major funding cuts, warns UNHCR” (previously cited).

<sup>228</sup> UNHCR, “Costa Rica’s solidarity with refugees threatened by major funding cuts, warns UNHCR” (previously cited).

<sup>229</sup> Interview by video call with NGO representatives, 12 May 2025.

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meaning that smaller, local organizations are now the main actors who remain to provide life-saving services to people on the move.

## 5.4 HAITI AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

### AID CUTS STRAIN ESSENTIAL SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS COLLECTIVELY EXPELLED TO HAITI

Haiti has been plunged into a serious humanitarian, political and security crisis following the assassination of president Jovenel Moïse in 2021, and the subsequent strengthening of criminal gangs that now dominate a significant part of the territory.<sup>230</sup> Amnesty International, UNHCR and other actors have called for an absolute ban on all returns of individuals to Haiti as conditions in the country are putting the lives and safety of Haitians at risk.<sup>231</sup>

Nevertheless, since October 2024, more than 180,000 people have been deported from the Dominican Republic to Haiti.<sup>232</sup> On 6 April 2025, the government of the Dominican Republic announced 15 additional measures aimed at further restricting migration, including implementing a system that exposes migrants to deportation after they access public health services.<sup>233</sup> Amnesty International considers that the collective expulsion of Haitians from the Dominican Republic is cruel, racist and is a practise prohibited by international law.<sup>234</sup> Due to the suspension of US foreign assistance, organizations that provide essential services, including basic assistance, food, temporary shelter, transportation support, psychological support and referrals to other services at different points along the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic have had to scale back their operations and are struggling to respond to large numbers of individuals in need of assistance with limited resources and staff capacity.<sup>235</sup> Amnesty International is particularly concerned about the situation of pregnant individuals, people who have just given birth and newborns who are being deported from the Dominican Republic as a result of the measures announced in April and who are likely to have healthcare and other needs upon arrival to Haiti.<sup>236</sup> According to IOM, “nearly 20,000 individuals – including a growing number of highly vulnerable women – were deported by land in April 2025, marking a record number for a one-month period”.<sup>237</sup>

The Trump administration has removed immigration protections for Haitians living in the United States including ending Temporary Protected Status by August 2025 and terminating the humanitarian parole process.<sup>238</sup> As a result, there is likely to be an increase in the number of deportations of individuals from the

<sup>230</sup> Amnesty International, “Haiti: Grave Crisis Requires International Condemnation and Lasting Solutions”, 19 March 2024, <https://www.amnestyusa.org/press-releases/haiti-grave-crisis-requires-international-condemnation-and-lasting-solutions/>.

<sup>231</sup> Amnesty International, “Haiti: Grave Crisis Requires International Condemnation and Lasting Solutions” (previously cited); Amnesty International, “Dominican Republic: Health protocol reinforces racism in migration policies”, 24 April 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/republica-dominicana-protocolo-de-salud-acentua-racismo-en-las-politicas-migratorias/>; UNHCR, “UNHCR calls on States to refrain from forced returns of Haitians”, 3 November 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/unhcr-calls-states-refrain-forced-returns-haitians>; OHCHR, “Comment by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk on deportation of Haitians from Dominican Republic”, 10 November 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/11/comment-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-deportation-haitians>.

<sup>232</sup> IOM, Statistiques sur les personnes déportées en Haïti depuis 2021, <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoieWZlYzU2MzktOWFkMCOOMDk4LWFOTQTNmQOYTU1ODkzOTQ2IiwidCI6IjE1ODgyNjJkLTlzMltNDNiNC1ZDZlLWJjZTQ5YzhINjE4NiIsImMiOjIh9> (only available in French); Amnesty International, “Dominican Republic: Health protocol reinforces racism in migration policies” (previously cited).

<sup>233</sup> Amnesty International, “Dominican Republic: Health protocol reinforces racism in migration policies” (previously cited).

<sup>234</sup> Amnesty International, “Dominican Republic: Health protocol reinforces racism in migration policies” (previously cited).

<sup>235</sup> Information provided to Amnesty International organization representatives, April & May 2025, on file with Amnesty International; IOM, Cartographie des services offerts aux migrants de retour en Haïti, <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoieWZlYzU2M4ZGUwMmQ5YzU2MzktOWFkMCOOMDk4LWFOTQTNmQOYTU1ODkzOTQ2IiwidCI6IjE1ODgyNjJkLTlzMltNDNiNC1ZDZlLWJjZTQ5YzhINjE4NiIsImMiOjIh9> (only available in French); ACAPS, “Haiti: Anticipated implications of US funding freeze”, 21 February 2025, [https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data\\_Product/Main\\_media/20250221\\_ACAPS\\_Haiti-anticipated\\_implications\\_of\\_US\\_funding\\_freeze\\_.pdf](https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20250221_ACAPS_Haiti-anticipated_implications_of_US_funding_freeze_.pdf).

<sup>236</sup> Amnesty International, “Dominican Republic: Health protocol reinforces racism in migration policies” (previously cited).

<sup>237</sup> United Nations, “Haiti Humanitarian Country Team deeply concerned about the deportation of pregnant and breastfeeding women from the Dominican Republic”, 19 May 2025, <https://haiti.un.org/en/294691-haiti-humanitarian-country-team-deeply-concerned-about-deportation-pregnant-and>.

<sup>238</sup> USCIS, “Temporary Protected Status Designated Country: Haiti”, <https://www.uscis.gov/humanitarian/temporary-protected-status/temporary-protected-status-designated-country-haiti>; US Federal Register, Termination of Parole Processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and

US to Haiti in the second half of 2025. Together with a continued decrease in humanitarian capacities on the ground, this will lead to more human rights abuses and protection issues.<sup>239</sup>

## 5.5 MEXICO

### IMPACTS OF AID CUTS ON PEOPLE STRANDED IN TIJUANA FOLLOWING END OF ASYLUM AT US-MEXICO BORDER

Mexico is the last country of transit for thousands of migrants and people seeking safety on their way to the United States; many of whom are fleeing persecution and serious human rights violations in their countries of origin, including Venezuela and Haiti. As the result of a series of measures taken by the Trump administration, there is currently no way to seek international protection at the US-Mexico border.<sup>240</sup> The CBP One application was shut down on 20 January 2025 and all existing appointments were cancelled, including appointments that were scheduled the afternoon of January 20.<sup>241</sup> According to publicly available information, approximately 270,000 people had been trying to secure appointments through the application and over 30,000 existing appointments were cancelled.<sup>242</sup>

Shelters, national and international organizations interviewed by Amnesty International in Tijuana in February 2025 told the organization about the immediate harms they suffered following the termination of US foreign assistance and the direct impacts on people on the move in Mexico.<sup>243</sup> Several shelters stated that the loss of funding to international organizations had resulted in these organizations suspending certain types of support to the shelters, including monthly food assistance and support for services such as internet, telephone, household appliances, infrastructure, fuel and security measures.<sup>244</sup> Shelter staff told Amnesty International that the funding cuts have put them at risk of having to close down or being forced to ask for financial contributions from the migrants and asylum seekers themselves to cover their expenses.<sup>245</sup> Organizations were forced to cancel activities they carried out in shelters, including legal workshops and recreational activities with children and youth. Living allowances and economic support given directly to people seeking safety by organizations were also terminated.<sup>246</sup>

Staff at the Jardín de Mariposas shelter, a shelter for LGBTQIA+ people seeking safety, stated: “We’ve been able to pay for the cut in aid for now, but we’re taking money that was destined for other things, such as hiring more people. These measures directly affect a population that is being hit from all sides, they can’t work in Mexico, they don’t have documents, they don’t have money. Imagine now that it’s more difficult to give them internet, food, a safe place”.<sup>247</sup>

There have also been reports of job losses in the humanitarian sector and the cancellation of contracts that were already underway.<sup>248</sup> For example, Asylum Access Mexico had to close three offices and cancel the

Venezuelans, 25 March 2025, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/03/25/2025-05128/termination-of-parole-processes-for-cubans-haitians-nicaraguans-and-venezuelans>.

<sup>239</sup> ACAPS, “Haiti: Anticipated implications of US funding freeze” (previously cited), p. 6.

<sup>240</sup> Amnesty International, *USA: Lives in Limbo* (previously cited), pp. 8-9.

<sup>241</sup> CBP, “CBP One™ Mobile Application”, 20 January 2025, [http://www.iptp-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/CBP\\_One\\_Mobile\\_Application\\_Website\\_Update\\_1.20.25.pdf](http://www.iptp-production.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/CBP_One_Mobile_Application_Website_Update_1.20.25.pdf).

<sup>242</sup> The Guardian, “US asylum seekers in despair after Trump cancels CBP One app: ‘Start from zero again’”, 23 January 2025, <http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jan/23/trump-cbp-one-app-cancelled-mexico>.

<sup>243</sup> In-person interviews with organizations, Tijuana, Mexico, 4-7 February 2025; Amnesty International, *USA: Lives in Limbo* (previously cited).

<sup>244</sup> El Sol de la Laguna, “Migrants left without food support due to USAID cutbacks”, 11 February 2025, <https://oem.com.mx/elsoldelalaguna/local/migrantes-en-torreon-se-quedan-sin-apoyo-alimentario-por-recortes-a-la-usaid-21630419> (only available in Spanish).

<sup>245</sup> Amnesty International, *USA: Lives in Limbo* (previously cited), p. 18.

<sup>246</sup> In-person interviews with organizations, Tijuana, Mexico, 4-7 February 2025; *USA: Lives in Limbo* (previously cited), pp. 17-18.

<sup>247</sup> In-person interview with NGO representatives, Tijuana, Mexico, 4 February 2025; Amnesty International, *USA: Lives in Limbo* (previously cited), p. 17.

<sup>248</sup> Amnesty International, *USA: Lives in Limbo* (previously cited), pp. 17-18; Asylum Access Mexico, “Important notice: update on the recruitment process”, 5 February 2025, [https://www.facebook.com/AsylumAccessMX/photos/comunicadourgente-actualizaci%C3%B3nvacantesestimada-comunidadqueremos-agradecerles-p/677125011305747/?\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/AsylumAccessMX/photos/comunicadourgente-actualizaci%C3%B3nvacantesestimada-comunidadqueremos-agradecerles-p/677125011305747/?_rdr) (only available in Spanish).

recruitment of several staff positions.<sup>249</sup> Asylum Access Mexico provides legal support to people seeking asylum and migrants for their asylum and immigration processes in Mexico, services that are essential in the current context as the end of asylum at the US-Mexico border has resulted in many people deciding to claim asylum in Mexico.<sup>250</sup> UNHCR Mexico had to close four of its offices in the country, lay off 190 staff members and end support that it provided to 140 shelters in the country.<sup>251</sup>

## 5.6 MYANMAR AND THAILAND

### SUDDEN AND SEVERE AID CUTS DEEPEN HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN MYANMAR AND THAILAND

The initial foreign assistance freeze and stop-work order caught many organizations providing health services to Myanmar communities off guard, throwing them into damage control mode.<sup>252</sup> The development hit particularly hard in southeastern Myanmar and other areas beset by armed conflict, which has escalated since the 2021 military coup, as well as in refugee and internal displacement camps along the Thai-Myanmar border.

Programs providing frontline medical assistance, including secondary hospital referrals for war wounds, neonatal emergency care, air strike early-warning systems, and psychosocial support for survivors of attacks, were scaled back, paused, disrupted due to inability to keep staff, or stopped altogether. The freeze also impacted programs providing medicines for HIV, tuberculosis and malaria.<sup>253</sup> Renewed US funding in the aftermath of Myanmar's earthquake on 28 March 2025 is not intended to cover these shortfalls.<sup>254</sup>

The aid freeze posed serious risks to the rights to health of more than 100,000 people living in nine refugee camps on the Thai side of the border with Myanmar.<sup>255</sup> The majority of Myanmar refugees living inside Thailand along the border have been there for years, fleeing previous waves of violence back home in Myanmar. But the camps have grown in size since the 2021 coup. In February, Amnesty International spoke to refugees living in two separate camps along the border.<sup>256</sup> All said hospitals in the camp, which are run by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) through USAID funding, had abruptly shut down after the stop work order.<sup>257</sup> The impact of the initial shutdown was felt immediately. In the Umpien camp, for example, residents said at least four people died as a result of not receiving oxygen provided by the hospitals.<sup>258</sup>

<sup>249</sup> Asylum Access Mexico, "Important notice: update on the recruitment process", 5 February 2025, [https://www.facebook.com/AsylumAccessMX/photos/comunicadourgente-actualizaci%C3%B3nvacantesestimada-comunidadqueremos-agradecerles-p/677125011305747/?\\_rdr](https://www.facebook.com/AsylumAccessMX/photos/comunicadourgente-actualizaci%C3%B3nvacantesestimada-comunidadqueremos-agradecerles-p/677125011305747/?_rdr) (only available in Spanish); El Universal, "Tras recorte de EU, Asylum Access cierra tres oficinas en México; ONG ofrece apoyo humanitario a refugiados", 8 April 2025, <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/nacion/tras-recorte-de-eu-asylum-access-cierra-tres-oficinas-en-mexico-ong-ofrece-apoyo-humanitario-a-refugiados/> (only available in Spanish).

<sup>250</sup> Amnesty International, *USA: Lives in Limbo* (previously cited), p. 15.

<sup>251</sup> W Radio, "Criminalizar a los refugiados y la migración no tiene fundamento: Giovanni Lepri" (previously cited); Aristequi, "ACNUR cierra cuatro oficinas en México por 'recortes financieros'", 3 May 2025, <https://aristeguinoticias.com/030525/mexico/acnur-cierra-cuatro-oficinas-en-mexico-por-recortes-financieros/>.

<sup>252</sup> Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Recklessly abrupt US aid stoppage poses existential threat to human rights", 13 February 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/02/myanmar-recklessly-abrupt-us-aid-stoppage-poses-existential-threat-to-human-rights/>; Foreign Policy, "Trump Aid Cuts Threaten Myanmar's Youth", 27 March 2025, [https://foreignpolicy.com/?p=1191054&preview=true&preview\\_id=1191054?utm\\_content=gifting&tpcc=gifting\\_article&gifting\\_article=bXlhbm1hcl10cnVtc11c2FpZC1jdXRzLWVkdWNhdGlvbi1zdHVkZW50cy1kaXNw&pid=OC22371069](https://foreignpolicy.com/?p=1191054&preview=true&preview_id=1191054?utm_content=gifting&tpcc=gifting_article&gifting_article=bXlhbm1hcl10cnVtc11c2FpZC1jdXRzLWVkdWNhdGlvbi1zdHVkZW50cy1kaXNw&pid=OC22371069).

<sup>253</sup> Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Recklessly abrupt US aid stoppage poses existential threat to human rights" (previously cited).

<sup>254</sup> IRC, "Myanmar: One month since earthquake, IRC warns of deepening humanitarian crisis", 28 April 2025, <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/myanmar-one-month-earthquake-irc-warns-deepening-humanitarian-crisis>.

<sup>255</sup> Information shared by organizations with Amnesty International February & April 2025; UNHCR, Myanmar Situation, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar>.

<sup>256</sup> Interviews with refugees, February 2025; Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Recklessly abrupt US aid stoppage poses existential threat to human rights" (previously cited).

<sup>257</sup> The Guardian, "Along Thai-Myanmar border, Trump's decision to suspend foreign aid is deadly", 26 February 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/26/along-thai-myanmar-border-trumps-decision-to-suspend-foreign-aid-is-deadly-ntwnfb>; CNN, "No doctors for sick children. This is the reality of Trump's aid freeze in remote northern Thailand", 11 February 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/02/11/asia/thailand-myanmar-refugees-us-aid-freeze-trump-intl-hnk-dst/index.html>.

<sup>258</sup> Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Recklessly abrupt US aid stoppage poses existential threat to human rights" (previously cited); Reuters, "Burmese refugees dies after discharge from shut US-funded clinic, says family", 7 February 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/burmese-refugee-dies-after-discharge-shut-us-funded-clinic-says-family-2025-02-07/>.

As of mid-February, the IRC finally received a waiver to continue its work, though it was not allowed to provide family planning services.<sup>259</sup> The Border Consortium (TBC), which provides food and cooking fuel to all the nine camps along the border inside Thailand, also received a waiver to continue providing food and cooking assistance, but it is unclear how long that funding will continue.<sup>260</sup> Gaps in donations from other countries are a preexisting problem, leading to expected reductions in rations that several groups warned in May could lead to a humanitarian crisis.<sup>261</sup>

The shutdown of the USRAP has also taken a severe psychological toll on people who were on the verge of starting a new life in the US after years of living with significant protection concerns, in limbo without the right to work or pursue their futures.<sup>262</sup>

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into consideration Amnesty International's preliminary findings and states' human rights obligations under international human rights law, the organization makes the following recommendations.

### 6.1 TO THE US AUTHORITIES

#### TO THE US CONGRESS:

- Continue to robustly fund U.S. foreign assistance to support human rights around the world and do so at levels consistent with the commitment made by states in UN General Assembly Resolution 2626 and multiple subsequent high-level forums since the 1970's for states to commit at least 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) to overseas aid, with a view to continuing to support states to achieve progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights without discrimination, protect the rights of refugees and migrants, and to enable effective responses to humanitarian crises.
- Reject any requests by the administration to codify foreign assistance cuts through rescission.
- Ensure that all U.S. foreign assistance remains consistent with human rights and humanitarian principles and is allocated according to need.
- Use all available oversight levers to ensure the administration's use of foreign assistance does not contribute to human rights harms.
- Work with the administration to design reforms and shifts to international cooperation and aid to avoid discriminatory outcomes, and to do so in a way that is transparent, inclusive, and uses consultative processes - particularly with domestic civil society organizations as well as international organizations and foreign governments - in line with the principles of legality, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality in adherence to international human rights law and standards, including the right to seek safety. This must include taking necessary measures to eliminate and prevent any discriminatory impact on marginalized groups and persistent disparities and disadvantages.

<sup>259</sup> The Guardian, "Along Thai-Myanmar border, Trump's decision to suspend foreign aid is deadly" (previously cited).

<sup>260</sup> The Border Consortium, "Public Statement: Reduction in Food Support to Refugees", 31 March 2025, <https://www.theborderconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Reduction-statement-revised-V4.jpg>.

<sup>261</sup> DW, "Refugees from Myanmar facing deep food aid cuts in Thailand", 23 April 2025, <https://www.dw.com/en/refugees-from-myanmar-facing-deep-food-aid-cuts-in-thailand/a-72318013#:~:text=The%20cuts%20will%20hit%20more,most%20of%20their%20food%20support..>

<sup>262</sup> IRC, "IRC Responds to Termination of State Department Grants for the Refugee Resettlement Program" (previously cited).

- Provide guardrails to ensure measures restricting the rights of civil society organizations to seek, utilize and receive funding from domestic, foreign and international sources, including those aiming to ensure transparency and accountability, do not impose unnecessary or disproportionate restrictions on the right to association even for organizations based outside of the US, and promote self-regulatory efforts by civil society organizations that are open, transparent and accountable.

### **TO THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION, THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE:**

- Urgently restore foreign assistance, through the waiver process or otherwise, to programs where the chaotic and abrupt cut in funding has harmed human rights and ensure that future aid is not administered in a discriminatory manner, including designing a framework for the consistent application of special measures to achieve equality. This should include the collection of disaggregated data by race, ethnicity, gender, nationality, age, and other characteristics.
- Work closely with Congress to design reforms and shifts to international cooperation and aid to avoid discriminatory outcomes, and to do so in a way that is transparent, inclusive, and consultative processes - particularly with domestic civil society organizations as well as international organizations and foreign governments - in line with the principles of legality, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality in adherence to international human rights law and standards. This must include taking necessary measures to eliminate and prevent any discriminatory impact on marginalized groups and persistent disparities and disadvantages.
- Immediately release outstanding payments to US implementing partners.
- Guarantee the right of individuals to seek asylum, including by immediately restoring access to asylum at the US-Mexico border.
- Immediately restore the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and facilitate the immediate travel to the United States of those individuals whose travel was cancelled as a result of the executive order.

## **6.2 TO THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY**

- In line with the commitment made by states in UN General Assembly Resolution 2626 and multiple subsequent high-level forums since the 1970's to commit at least 0.7% of their gross national income (GNI) to overseas aid, continue the long-standing commitment to providing international cooperation with a view to continuing to support states to achieve progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights without discrimination, the rights of refugees and migrants, and to enable effective responses to humanitarian crises.
- Under the principle of responsibility sharing, States should provide increased support in the form of financial, material and technical assistance to programmes that enhance better protection for refugees and migrants, in particular those currently facing funding cuts.
- Safeguard civil society's ability around the world to realize their right to seek, receive and utilize resources by, among other measures, as per the US' obligations to guarantee freedom of association under the ICCPR, ensuring that domestic laws and regulations do not unfairly target or restrict the international flow of donations, discriminate against particular types of associations or have a general effect of shrinking the space for civil society in other countries.
- States with existing refugee resettlement programs should work to significantly increase the number of resettlement places they offer each year. States that have not yet established a

resettlement program should take immediate steps to do so. All refugee resettlement commitments should be guided by and respond to global needs.

- States should create and expand all available safe and legal pathways for refugees and migrants, including via community sponsorship/private sponsorship and humanitarian admissions.

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