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US Silences Immigrant Lifeline: Thousands of H-1B, Green Card Applicants Left Stranded

In a significant move impacting thousands of immigrants, especially from the Indian diaspora, the Trump administration has reportedly shut down the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) Ombudsman.

 **Mohammed Yousuf** 9 April 2025 - 16:32



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In a significant move impacting thousands of immigrants, especially from the Indian diaspora, the Trump administration has reportedly shut down the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) Ombudsman. This office previously served as a lifeline for those navigating delays and administrative hurdles in the US immigration system.

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
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According to the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA), the CIS Ombudsman handled approximately 30,000 requests last year. It helped immigrants—including H-1B visa holders, F-1


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international students, and green card applicants—resolve stalled cases, clerical errors, and unreasonable delays despite following due process.

“A Rare Source of Hope and Accountability”

Immigration experts have expressed serious concern over the decision. Varun Singh, Managing Director at XIPHIAS Immigration, described the shutdown as the removal of a “rare source of hope and accountability” for immigrants facing challenges with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS).

Dan Rothfeld, Managing Director at K Altman Law, said the closure would directly affect those navigating a system already burdened with complexity. “While the Ombudsman didn’t make immigration policy, it ensured transparency and fairness within the USCIS process,” he said, adding that its loss reduces the options available to those facing delays or policy errors.

Real-Life Cases Affected

The impact of the closure is already being felt. Rajiv S Khanna, an immigration attorney, recalled the case of an F-1 student whose OPT application was mistakenly rejected. “The student had already lost her job offer when we approached the Ombudsman. Their quick intervention reversed the mistake, saving her legal status,” he said.

Another case involved an engineer from Bangalore who had waited 11 months for an H-1B extension. “His employer was preparing to terminate his contract. After we contacted the Ombudsman, the approval came in two weeks,” Khanna noted.

Indians Still Lead in H-1B Numbers

Indian professionals are the largest recipients of H-1B visas, with over 207,000 granted in FY 2024. However, they also face the longest wait times for green cards—sometimes spanning decades due to per-country limits.

US government data indicates that over one million Indians are currently caught in green card backlogs. Immigration experts argue that this delays career progression and creates uncertainty for skilled talent who have lived legally in the US for years.

A Step Backward for Fairness?

K Altman Law’s statement summed up the general sentiment among immigration professionals: “This is a step backward for due process. We urge continued oversight and the preservation of mechanisms that protect fairness and transparency in immigration.”

For many in the Indian diaspora, the closure of the CIS Ombudsman office is not just a policy change—it’s the loss of a critical safeguard in an already uncertain system.

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