

The U.S. Embassy in Burundi has announced a temporary suspension of visa issuance to Burundian nationals; citing serious concerns over high visa overstay rates and difficulties in deportation cooperation.

A report from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) reveals that Burundians have one of the highest visa overstay rates among foreign nationals. In fiscal year 2023, the overstay rate for Burundians on B-1/B-2 visas (tourist and business visas) was 15.35%, while the rate for those on student and exchange visas (F, M, and J categories) was even higher at 17.52%.

These figures indicate a significant number of Burundian visitors remain in the U.S. beyond their authorized period, raising concerns for U.S. immigration authorities.

Beyond overstay issues, the U.S. has expressed frustration over Burundi's lack of cooperation in accepting the return of its nationals subject to deportation orders. The DHS reported that Burundi has "denied or unreasonably delayed" repatriations of Burundian citizens ordered removed from the United States. This reluctance to facilitate deportations has contributed to the imposition of visa sanctions on Burundian nationals.

The suspension of visa issuance to Burundi is part of a wider U.S. strategy that links immigration cooperation with visa privileges. Countries that fail to work collaboratively with the U.S. on deportations risk facing visa restrictions, trade penalties, or reductions in aid. This approach aims to encourage governments to take responsibility for their nationals abroad and uphold immigration agreements.

The visa suspension impacts thousands of Burundians seeking to visit the United States for tourism, education, or business. It serves as a cautionary tale that individual actions, such as visa overstays, can have national consequences, affecting future opportunities for all.

The U.S. Embassy and DHS hope this measure will prompt improved cooperation from the Burundian government to address these challenges and restore normal visa services.