# Trump gives Liberian immigrants a year to leave or face deportation

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President Donald Trump announced in a memo last Tuesday to the Department of Homeland Security that he was formally ending the program known as Deferred Enforced Departure, which allowed Liberian immigrants to stay and work legally in the United States since 1999. The program was established by President Bill Clinton in response to the devastated social and economic situation in Liberia following the brutal civil war of the 1990s.

More than 800,000 Liberians fled their country during the civil war, with a small percentage reaching the United States, where an estimated 4,000 reside to this day. These workers now have a year to leave the country or face deportation.

The Deferred Enforced Departure program had been renewed by subsequent administrations since 1999, but Trump's memo declared that improved conditions in Liberia meant that the program was no longer necessary.

"Liberia is no longer experiencing armed conflict and has made significant progress in restoring stability and democratic governance," the memo said. "Liberia has also concluded reconstruction from prior conflicts, which has contributed significantly to an environment that is able to handle adequately the return of its nationals."

In fact, Liberia has yet to recover from the devastating Ebola outbreak of 2014-2015 which claimed nearly 5,000 lives in Western Africa. As a result, the health care system is in shambles as well as the overall economy. Unemployment and government corruption have made Liberia rank 177 out of 188 on the United Nation's Human Development Index, with 80 percent of the population living on $1.25 a day.

Liberia was founded by freed American slaves in 1822 but became a de facto colony of the US not long after. Rich in natural minerals, including oil, the country was heavily exploited by the US after World War II and during the Cold War.

Despite being one of the largest recipients of US aid on the African continent, Liberia's population has remained mostly poor. With the end of the Cold War and the end of direct US economic support the country descended into civil war in the 1990s. The most recent conflict from 1999 to 2003 claimed the lives of some 300,000 people.

This will be the third time this year the Trump administration has announced an end for special immigration status for a whole host of countries. The White House announced an end for the Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Sudanese and Haitians, and is actively seeking an end to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program which covers more than 800,000 brought by their parents to the US as children without proper documentation.

In January, Trump called for an end to immigration from "shithole countries" in a meeting with Congressional leaders. Trump later denied making the remarks but has made no attempt to conceal his contempt for foreigners and immigrants. The administration is now involved in a savage war on immigrants, implementing ever more restrictive measures every day.

Most of the 4,000 Liberians facing deportation live in Minnesota, home to the largest Liberian community in the country, around 30,000 people. Many work in the state's health care industry and have families and ties to the community stretching back decades.

Democratic politicians in Minnesota had been urging Trump to extend the program with governor Mark Dayton writing an open later asking the president to

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reconsider, saying Liberians “are part of the social fabric of Minnesota.” Several hundred Liberians gathered from throughout the state on Monday at the capitol building in Saint Paul to demand that Trump renew Deferred Enforcement Departure. Despite these protests Trump refused to show any mercy towards Liberian immigrants.

Christina Wilson, a Liberian immigrant who escaped the country’s civil war in 2000 told Minnesota Public Radio, “Liberia is a place that I left long time. I don't know if I have a place there right now," adding, “Homes were destroyed. I have nothing to go to, to be frank.”

Wilson lives in Crystal, Minnesota, a suburb of Minneapolis, and works as a nursing assistant. She earned a culinary arts degree in the hopes that she would one day open up a restaurant; now she faces deportation.

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