



Written by [Peter Rykowski](#) on May 18, 2026

Trump Admin Ends “Era of Amnesty” in Immigration Courts

During U.S. President Donald Trump’s first year back in office, his administration shifted U.S. immigration courts significantly in a pro-enforcement direction.

Asylum Cases, Removal Orders, Court Backlog

According to [data](#) from the Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), the agency within the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) that runs U.S. immigration courts, the percentage of applications for asylum that immigration judges granted — versus solely applications denied — fell to 8.8 percent through the second quarter of fiscal 2026, compared to 24.4 percent in fiscal 2025 and 45.7 percent in fiscal 2024.



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According to *The New York Times*, which [examined](#) the monthly asylum grant rate since the beginning of Barack Obama’s presidency, the asylum rate in February 2026 fell to seven percent, down from more than 50 percent during portions of Obama’s and Joe Biden’s presidencies, and still lower than during Trump’s first term.

The number of removal orders issued by the EOIR — which allow the federal government to deport noncitizens — has also [increased](#) significantly, [rising 57 percent](#) from fiscal 2024 to fiscal 2025. And as [The New American](#) and [other media outlets](#) have reported, the number of “voluntary departure” orders has reached a record high.

On top of this, the [backlog](#) in immigration-court cases [declined](#) in fiscal 2025, the [first time](#) in 17 years (since [fiscal 2008](#)) that more asylum cases were completed than initiated — although, because of the massive increase in asylum cases resulting from the Biden administration’s open-borders policies, the reduction in pending cases is relatively minor.

These statistics indicate that the DOJ is doing its part to crack down on illegal migration and increase deportations — including by refusing to entertain the large number of [dubious applications](#) for “asylum” made by illegal aliens.

Undoing Biden’s Damage

The Trump administration’s immigration-court policies are a marked change from the previous administration. The Biden administration — in addition to granting asylum at a much higher rate — used “[administrative closure](#)” to, effectively, indefinitely postpone the deportation of inadmissible migrants. According to a 2024 [report](#) by the U.S. House Judiciary Committee titled “Quiet Amnesty: How the Biden-Harris Administration Uses the Nation’s Immigration Courts to Advance an Open-



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borders Agenda,” “more than 700,000 illegal aliens have had their cases dismissed, terminated, or administratively closed, allowing those aliens to stay in the country indefinitely without facing immigration consequences.”

The Trump administration has [reversed](#) or [reined in](#) Biden’s immigration-court policies, in addition to its [broader crackdown](#) on mass migration, leading to [historically low](#) levels of legal and [illegal](#) migration.

To be clear, the Trump administration still has much work to do. For example, the numbers of “[abandonments](#)” — cases in which the illegal alien did not show up to his or her hearing — and cases not adjudicated [remain](#) at record high levels, an [inevitable](#) consequence of the Biden-era migration crisis. Furthermore, the U.S. asylum system itself is in dire need of fundamental reform — something [only Congress](#) can deliver. And the southern border itself is [vulnerable](#) to another migrant surge that could once again overwhelm U.S. immigration courts.

Nonetheless, the EOIR’s data show that the Trump administration — despite its broken promises on spending, foreign entanglements, the Epstein files, and other policies — has so far delivered on immigration, giving merit to the White House’s [claim](#) that the “Era of Amnesty Is Over.”

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