

Sensitive Locations/Protected Areas and Immigration Enforcement

January 2025

What are protected areas?

Protected areas are places where, in the past, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) immigration enforcement activities were prohibited in most instances, such as: schools of all levels, medical or mental healthcare facilities, places of worship or religious study, places where children gather (i.e. playgrounds, recreation centers), and social services establishments (i.e. domestic violence shelters, victim services centers).

Is there currently a policy reflecting this guidance?

No. The Trump Administration terminated this guidance on January 21, 2025. In the past, this guidance was reflected by policy established in [2011 for Immigration and Customs Enforcement \(ICE\)](#), and in [2013 for Customs and Border Patrol \(CBP\)](#). Before its termination in 2025, a [2021 policy directive](#) covering both ICE and CBP was the active guidance on immigration enforcement actions that require special protection. The 2021 DHS policy outlined exceptional circumstances which allowed immigration enforcement actions to be taken at or near protected areas but prohibited enforcement actions at or near such spaces that included: arrests, civil apprehensions, searches, inspections, seizures, service of charging documents or subpoenas, interviews, and surveillance for purposes of immigration enforcement.

What will the impact be on immigrant communities now that the guidance is rescinded?

Rescinding the memos allows ICE and CBP to carry out enforcement actions in these locations. Under the first Trump Administration, despite the existence of the protected areas guidance, there were highly publicized incidents of enforcement against immigrants [dropping their children off at school](#), [en route to the hospital](#), [inside a courthouse](#), and outside [church-affiliated homeless shelters](#). As in the past, it is possible that immigrant families could choose not to access education, healthcare, or other available services and activities out of fear.

What is being done as President Trump ended the protected areas memo?

In 2021 during the 117th Congress, Representative Espaillat (D-NY) introduced [House Resolution 529](#), the “Protecting Sensitive Locations Act”. This bill prohibited immigration enforcement actions within 1,000 feet of a sensitive location unless there are exigent and exceptional circumstances, in which case prior approval must be obtained from certain officials. The sensitive locations in this bill mirror those in the 2021 Protected Areas Memo and if Congress were to introduce and pass it, sensitive locations protections would be codified into law.

What can I do?

- Write to your Representative or Senator urging them to introduce and support the “Protecting Sensitive Locations Act”

Write a letter urging your Senators and Representative to introduce and support the “Protecting Sensitive Locations Act”. [Click here to find out who represents you in Congress](#), and reach out to our Policy and Advocacy team at advocacy@globalrefuge.org for support drafting your letter.

- **Advocate with the Global Refuge Advocacy and Policy team**
[Sign up](#) to receive the monthly newsletter, invitations to informative webinars, and learn how to engage lawmakers on migration policy issues.
- **Pray for immigrants and refugees.**
Utilize Global Refuge’s [prayer resources](#) and lift your voice in prayer for immigrants and refugees.