

WHAT HAPPENS TO 'DREAMERS'?

The Trump administration on Tuesday ordered the end of the "Dreamers" program that allowed illegal immigrants who came to the United States as children to remain in the country. That move threatens the futures of some 800,000 people, many now in schools, with jobs and families in the United States.

WHAT IS THE 'DREAMERS' PROGRAM?

In a presidential order in June 2012, president Barack Obama launched DACA – Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals – that aimed to provide a stable future for people who arrived in the country illegally as children and stayed. Dubbed "Dreamers," they were granted under presidential order the right to remain and study or work legally, renewing their status regularly.

WHY END DACA?

Trump, who argued DACA protected people who broke the law, was unfair to legal immigrants, and encouraged Congress's power to make immigration law. The government also argued that legal challenges by a number of states made DACA and a 2014 sister program, DAPA, untenable.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN NOW?

Encouraged by Obama's move, about 800,000 people registered under DACA, confident that they would be safe from expulsion. Now the government has access to all their personal data, making it hard for most to hide. About 200,000 people will see their resident permits expire by the end of 2017.

Another 275,000 expire in 2018, and the rest between January and August 2019. Under Trump's order, those with permits are safe until they expire. People with permits that expire within the next six months will be deported by October 5. But new applications will not be accepted. Once their DACA permits expire, individuals will not have the legal right to work, and theoretically could be deported any time – though current policy only threatens illegal immigrants who have committed serious crimes.

The White House has indicated that the six month grace period gives Congress an opportunity, if it wants, to come up with legislation that could replace DACA and strengthen its legal foundations.

SOURCE: AFP



Young immigrants, activists and supporters of the DACA program march through downtown Los Angeles, California on Tuesday after the Trump administration formally announced it will end the DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) program, giving Congress six months to act.

LEGAL BATTLE OVER REFUGEE QUOTAS

East Europeans lose at EU court

AFP, Brussels

The EU yesterday won a high-level legal battle against eastern European countries that have refused to admit thousands of asylum seekers based on mandatory quotas for the bloc's member states.

The European Court of Justice, the 28-nation bloc's top court, threw out the challenge from Hungary and Slovakia against a scheme the Brussels launched two years ago to ease the burden on Greece and Italy.

The European Union has been grappling with the worst migrant crisis since World War II, with more than one million people fleeing war, persecution and poverty in the Middle East and Africa.

"The court dismisses the actions brought by Slovakia and Hungary against the provisional mechanism for the mandatory relocation of asylum seekers," the Luxembourg-based court said.

"That mechanism actually contributes to enabling Greece and Italy to deal with the impact of the 2015 migration crisis and is proportionate."

The continuing crisis peaked in 2015. More than 1.6 million people have landed on Greek and Italian shores.

The verdict was welcomed by the European Commission. However, Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto slammed the verdict as "irresponsible," saying it "threatens the security of all of Europe."

The top court's press office told AFP there is "no onward appeal for Hungary and Slovakia" when asked about Szijjarto's vow that Budapest will use "all legal means" to fight the scheme.

Nightmare for 'Dreamers'

Anger boils as Obama calls Trump's repeal of amnesty 'wrong'

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump yesterday ended an amnesty for 800,000 people brought illegally to the United States as minors, throwing their future in serious doubt and triggering fierce condemnation from across the political spectrum. Business leaders, unions, religious groups, opposition Democrats and many within Trump's own Republican party joined forces to criticize the phased end of protections for people who arrived in the United States under the age of 16.

So-called "Dreamers" – many Hispanic, now in their twenties – will have somewhere between six and around 24 months before they become illegal and subject to potential deportation.

Trump later insisted he had "great heart for the folks we are talking about, a great love for them" and called on Congress to pass wide-ranging immigration reform – something lawmakers have tried and failed to do for decades. The president vowed to "revisit" the issue in the fall.

Trump had argued that the amnesty introduced by Barack Obama in 2012 was unconstitutional overreach of presidential powers and would likely be struck down by the courts eventually.

The announcement prompted ex-president Obama to make a rare re-entry onto the political stage to decry the decision as "wrong," "self-defeating" and "cruel."

Around 800,000 people took up the offer to get two-year

renewable permits under the DACA scheme, but a similar number opted to stay in the shadows largely because of uncertainty over policy once Obama left office.

Trump, who can for office on a hard-right immigration and law and order platform, painted his decision as an effort to put natural-born Americans first.

The Mexican government, mayors from across the US and the Service Employees International Union were among those who issued statements of condemnation.

The US Conference of Catholic Bishops called the decision "reprehensible" and said "today, our nation has done the opposite of how Scripture calls us to respond."

Opponents hinted that they may challenge Trump's decision in the courts.

Even Trump allies in business and the Republican Party voiced concern, arguing the policy would damage the economy and was not in keeping with US values.

Asked if the budget would ever allow a high-tech firm of California's Silicon Valley to stand firmly behind a DACA repeal, the program offers the equivalent of a renewable residence permit to young people who were under the age of 16 when they arrived and have no criminal record.

Top congressional Republican Paul Ryan called on lawmakers to step in – although the chances of a badly divided Congress reaching a long-elusive agreement on immigration reform in months appear dim.

Irma batters Caribbean islands

AFP, Marigot

Monster Hurricane Irma slammed into the French Caribbean islands yesterday after making landfall in Barbuda, packing ferocious winds and causing major flooding in low-lying areas.

As the rare Category Five storm barreled its way across the Caribbean, it brought winds of up to 185 miles per hour (294 kilometers per hour), weather experts said.

After making landfall just before 6:00 GMT in Barbuda, part of the twin island nation of Antigua and Barbuda, the hurricane swept on to French-run Saint Barthélemy, also known as St. Barts, and Saint Martin, an island divided between France and the Netherlands.

A French weather office said Irma was "a historic hurricane" (an unprecedented intensity over the Atlantic), with a French minister saying it had already "caused major damage" across the two

territories.

Coastal areas were being "battered extremely violently" by the sea, with the weather office logging winds of 244 mph (391 kmh) before its monitoring equipment was destroyed by the hurricane.

With the islands' maximum alert ahead of the arrival of the storm, France had issued the alarm over the fate of some 7,000 people who refused to seek shelter.

France's minister for overseas territories said the islanders had likely underestimated the power of the storm.

Dutch national broadcaster NOS also reported "enormous damage" on widespread destruction.

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