

Judge reiterates decision that AID contractors must be paid. Devex, 26 Feb 2025

Courting trouble

A federal judge has had enough. He's ordered the Trump administration **to release millions in frozen foreign aid by midnight tonight** — after two weeks of stalling.

“I don't know why I can't get a straight answer from you,” Judge Amir Ali told the administration's attorney at a hearing yesterday. Since Trump froze aid on Jan. 20, his team has fired thousands, gutted USAID, blocked hundreds of grants, and refused to pay its bills. Despite Ali's order to lift the freeze, hundreds of millions remain in limbo.

The judge isn't buying excuses. He [ruled all pre-Feb. 13 funds must be released by midnight](#) and demanded a status update by noon. **But will the money move? Many doubt it.**

“The judge clearly has reiterated now, for the fourth time in two-and-a-half weeks, that his temporary restraining order stands,” says Mitchell Warren, head of [AVAC](#). “But clearly the government is ignoring it.”

Since Jan. 22, 500 [USAID](#) grants and **750 State Department grants have been terminated**. The administration insists it can still review, suspend, and cancel awards. But Ali shut that down, rejecting its argument: “The Court was not inviting Defendants to continue the suspension.”

Even if funds unfreeze, **who's left at USAID to process them?** [Up to 2,000 staff were just fired](#), and most remaining hires lost access to their accounts. “Impossible,” a former senior USAID official tells my colleague Elissa Miolene. The government made it “impossible to comply.”

And even groups granted waivers haven't been paid. Despite that, Ali is doubling down, ordering “all necessary actions” to ensure payments move. “I am now on the edge of my seat until 11:59 [p.m.],” Warren says. “I don't fully expect compliance from the government.”

Hours after the judge's order, **the Trump administration filed an appeal**, attempting to continue blocking foreign assistance funding and halting any additional payments.

Read: [Judge orders USAID to release millions of dollars in foreign aid](#)