

Editor's Choice



Ziv Rozenfeld of Israel poses for a photo in the Nikon Pop Up Studio during the 2019 CES in Las Vegas



Attendees check out the Panasonic SPACe_L Autonomous Cabin, a concept interior for a luxury autonomous vehicle, during the 2019 CES in Las Vegas



Attendees look over Changhong 8K CHIQ televisions during the 2019 CES in Las Vegas



A Hisense A6 dual screen, AMOLED display on the front and a E Ink Carta HD screen on the back, smartphone is displayed during the 2019 CES in Las Vegas



A DJI Mavic 2 Zoom flies in a netted area during the 2019 CES in Las Vegas, Nevada, U.S. January 9, 2019. REUTERS/Steve Marcus



Jean Pierre "JP" Bolat demonstrates Movia Robotics educational software for children with autism on an Avatarmind iPal robot during the 2019 CES in Las Vegas



Attendees try out massage chairs in the Homedics booth during the 2019 CES in Las Vegas, Nevada, U.S. January 9, 2019. REUTERS/Steve Marcus



Pet fitness robots, which move automatically or are controlled with a smartphone, are displayed at the Varlam booth during the 2019 CES in Las Vegas

Hung Le's face lit up when his 7-year-old daughter came home from school Friday. She took off her shoes with a wide grin on her face and skipped over to her father, who was sitting in the kitchen of her aunt's Spring home. He gave her a side hug, the arm of his wheelchair creating a barrier between the two.

"There's no living if I go back to Vietnam, only death," Le said after she left the room. He was referring to his fate if the Trump administration's latest immigration policy proposal goes into effect.

The U.S. and Vietnamese governments met last Monday to discuss dissolving a 2008 repatriation agreement, according to immigration advocacy groups and multiple media outlets. The memorandum of understanding between the countries barred the deportation of Vietnamese immigrants with final removal orders who arrived in the United States prior to July 12, 1995 — the date Vietnam and the United States re-established diplomatic relations.



Donald Trump and Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen speak at a meeting in February 2018.

If Vietnam caves to pressure from the U.S. to back out of the agreement set to renew in January, an estimated 9,000 Vietnamese immigrants nationwide — and roughly 1,500 in Texas — would be subject to deportation at the start of the new year. With a criminal record from the late 1990s, Le could be one of them.

The move, immigration advocates and lawyers say, would be a devastating and unfair blow to a vulnerable population. Many came to the United States to flee the Vietnam War only to be placed in struggling neighborhoods with little or no resources. As a result, some may have looked to gangs for support they couldn't find in their homes, schools and communities.

"The original agreement for us has been tremendously important in providing humanitarian relief and protection for Vietnamese-Americans who came over as refugees... and unfortunately committed crimes they have served through sentences, many of them a decade old," said Quyen Dinh, executive

director of the Washington, D.C.-based Southeast Asian Resource Action Center.

inh added that the government considers a criminal act by a noncitizen problematic in and of itself, thanks to major immigration law reforms passed in 1996. Those reforms "expanded the definition of what is considered a felony by so many criteria, that even small crimes that are misdemeanors can be classified as aggravated felonies," Dinh said.

There has been a surge in immigration arrests of people living in the United States under the President Trump, Those who entered the country illegally prior

to 1995, or who overstayed temporary visas would also potentially be affected by the policy change, said Khanh Pham, attorney for the refugee and asylum advocacy group Boat People SOS.

Policy shifts

The Trump administration started shifting gears on the 2008 agreement in the spring of 2017, stating that it does not protect Vietnamese immigrants convicted of criminal offenses from deportation. Vietnamese immigrants with final deportation orders started getting detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement when they stopped by for their routine check-ins with the agency, and Vietnam accepted only about a dozen repatriates before hardening its stance again, Pham and Dinh said.

With nowhere to send the rest of the newly-detained immigrants, the administration was then sued by civil rights groups who claimed it was violating the ruling in *Zadvydas v. Davis*, a 2001 Supreme Court decision that deemed it illegal to hold immigrants in detention indefinitely.

However, the resource action committee released a report on Dec. 8 that the two governments were meeting to reconsider renewing the repatriation agreement. The Atlantic reported last week that a State Department spokesperson confirmed that officials with the Department of Homeland Security met with representatives of the Vietnamese embassy in Washington, D.C., but declined to provide details of when the talks took place or what was discussed.

Phuoc Thang, his wife Kat and their two daughters Audrina, 17 months, and Mia 3 spend time together at home in San Jose, Calif., on Friday, July 20, 2018. Thang is among roughly 200 Cambodian & Vietnamese immigrants who, for the first time, are under threat of deportation for old crimes many of them committed as teenagers. (Photo Bay Area News Group)

Neither Homeland Security nor the Vietnamese embassy in Washington responded to requests for comment from the Houston Chronicle.

Experts say this is the Trump administration's latest move showing its hardened stance on immigration. Between 1998 and 2016, Vietnam accepted about 30 deported repatriates each year, Dinh said. That number more than doubled to 71 people in 2017.

"It's very disturbing to me, targeting our community, because Vietnamese Ameri-

cans have contributed significantly to the vibrant, diverse and strong communities here in Houston and in the U.S. with so many achievements and contributions," said community organizer Anhlanh Nguyen. "America is a great place for the melting pot — I feel like we're going backward."

Preparing for the worst

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner released a statement Monday in opposition to the potential policy change, saying that Houston's 91,000 Vietnamese immigrants "have enriched the economic, cultural, religious and intellectual fabric of our city."

"Potentially deporting thousands of these refugees strikes at the heart of Houston and the soul of America," Turner continued. "To say to them now that they must return to a place where they suffered many years ago, and where they no longer have a home, is wrong."

A U.S. soldier guards Vietnamese refugees on ship heading to the U.S. in the 1960's. Dinh said people have been coming to the resource center in a panic, unsure if they would be affected by the policy change and separated from their families.

"We don't know if the agreement has been changed at all, but we're preparing families for the worst-case scenario," she said.

The organization has been recommending people find immigration attorneys to reopen and examine their cases, and to seek pardons from state governors for past convictions.

For Le, being deported would separate him from his daughter, who he still calls his baby — a heartbreaking possibility for the single dad.

It would also mean risking his life, Le said. Two years ago, he was paralyzed from the chest down during a car accident. Le says that going back to Vietnam would mean death.

"In my condition, there's no living if I'm to go back," he said. "I have to take medication for the rest of my life, have to use equipment to go pee, I can't live normally. Maximum for me — four months." (Courtesy houston-chronicle.com)

9,000 Vietnamese Immigrants Nationwide

And Close To 1,500 In Texas Could Be Affected

Vietnamese Refugees, Immigrants

Across U.S. Face Deportation

Under Proposed Trump Policy

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



Khanh Hung Le, 47, thinks about what would happen to him and his 7-year-old daughter if he is deported back to Vietnam. Le and his daughter live at his sister's house in Spring. Le legally moved to the United States in the 1990s and has criminal records from when he was young. A car accident a few years ago left him paralyzed from the chest down.

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Violence Against Journalists Hits Unprecedented Levels: RSF

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

PARIS (Reuters) - The murder of Saudi columnist Jamal Khashoggi in a year when more than half of all journalists killed were targeted deliberately reflects a hatred of the media in many areas of society, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said on Tuesday.

At least 63 professional journalists around the world were killed doing their jobs in 2018, RSF said, a 15 percent increase on last year. The number of fatalities rises to 80 when including all media workers and citizen journalists.

"The hatred of journalists that is voiced ... by unscrupulous politicians, religious leaders and businessmen has tragic consequences on the ground, and has been reflected in this disturbing increase in violations against journalists," RSF Secretary-General Christophe Deloire said in a statement.

Khashoggi, a royal insider who became a critic of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and began writing for the Washington Post after moving to the United States last year, was killed inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul in October.

Khashoggi's death sparked global outrage. Saudi officials have rejected accusations that the crown prince ordered his death.

The Paris-based body said that the three most dangerous countries for journalists to work in were Afghanistan, Syria and Mexico.

Meanwhile, the shooting of five employees of the Capital Gazette newspaper propelled the United States into the ranks of the most dangerous countries.

The media freedom organization said 348 journalists are being detained worldwide, compared with 326 at this time in 2017. China, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Egypt hold more than half the world's imprisoned journalists. (Courtesy Oann.com)



Related 2018 has been a brutal year for journalists, and it keeps getting worse



A demonstrator holds a poster with a picture of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi outside the Saudi Arabia consulate in Istanbul, Turkey October 25, 2018. (Photo/REUTERS)



Members of the Turkish-Arab Journalists' Association hold posters with photos of missing Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi during a protest near the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. (Photo/AP)

2018 has been a brutal year for journalists. A few weeks ago, prominent Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi went to the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul to pick up some paperwork. He never returned home, and un-

named Turkish officials have said that he was killed inside the consulate by a "murder squad" dispatched from the kingdom.

A few days later, the body of Bulgarian journalist Viktoria Marinova was found in Ruse, a city in the country's north. Preliminary investigations suggest Marinova, who spent the past year reporting on corruption involving money from the European Union, was raped and beaten, then strangled. The country's interior minister called the murder "exceptionally brutal," though it's not clear whether her death was related to her work. Marinova was the second journalist killed in Europe this year. In February, Slovakian investigative journalist Jan Kuciak was shot dead in his apartment along with his fiancée. Kuciak covered tax evasion and fraud and had been investigating the finances of people connected to the country's governing party. The head of Slovakia's police said it was "likely" Kuciak's death was connected to his work.



Mourners in Sofia, Bulgaria, Oct. 8, lit candles for Viktoria Marinova, a 30-year-old journalist who was raped and killed. (AP)

Taken together, this recent round of tragedies highlights how dangerous it has become to practice journalism. At least 43 journalists have been killed for their work so far in 2018, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. Fifteen other journalists have also been killed, though their deaths have not been officially linked to their work. The most dangerous country in the world for journalists is Afghanistan, where 13 members of the press have been killed this year, many in terrorist attacks. Reporters in

Mexico are also particularly vulnerable. At least six have died this year, often in acts of grotesque violence perpetrated by drug cartels and corrupt government officials.

Additionally, at least 155 journalists around the world are imprisoned, along with 142 citizen journalists and 19 media assistants. Turkey is one major culprit, imprisoning more than 250 reporters for their work and often accusing them of things like "making propaganda for a terrorist organization." And two Reuters photographers continue to languish in prison in Myanmar, where they've been charged under the obscure Official Secrets Act with "illegally acquir[ing] information." The pair reported extensively on last year's military campaign of violence and expulsion against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority.

Journalism watchdog groups warn that these statistics display a worrying trend: Journalists everywhere are facing more pressures and enjoy less safety.



President Trump responded briefly to a reporter's question about missing Washington Post contributor Jamal Khashoggi at the White House on Oct. 9. (The Washington Post)

"There are worrying developments," Joel Simon, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists, said to The Washington Post at the beginning of this year. Simon pointed to the way President Trump and other leaders, including Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Hungary's Viktor Orban, have vilified the press as a major factor. Trump and others have called journalists "enemies of the people," and reporters have also been labeled as terrorists in some places and forced to comply with opaque and secret legal proceedings.

"The political cost of this sort of behavior has diminished, and that tips the balance in the wrong direction," Simon said. (Courtesy washingtonpost.com)

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