Judge pauses Trump plan to put thousands of USAID staff on leave

A judge has temporarily blocked President Donald Trump's plan to place 2,200 employees of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) on paid leave, hours before it was due to happen

Judge pauses Trump plan to put thousands of USAID staff on leaveA judge has temporarily blocked

President Donald Trump's plan to place 2,200 employees of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) on paid leave, hours before it was due to happenJudge Carl Nichols said he would issue a

"very limited" temporary restraining order in response to a lawsuit filed by unions, challenging the plan to place thousands of staff on leave from midnight on Friday.

USAID, which is the US government's main overseas development arm, employs about 10,000 people, two-thirds of whom work overseas. It's unclear where the remaining staff stand regarding their jobs.

Under Trump's plan, some 611 employee would have been kept working at the agency. The ruling came as officials removed and covered USAID signs at the organisation's headquarters in Washington DC.Judge pauses Trump plan to put thousands of USAID staff on leave

Getty Images USAIDGetty Images

A judge has temporarily blocked President Donald Trump's plan to place 2,200 employees of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) on paid leave, hours before it was due to happen.

Judge Carl Nichols said he would issue a "very limited" temporary restraining order in response to a lawsuit filed by unions, challenging the plan to place thousands of staff on leave from midnight on Friday.

USAID, which is the US government's main overseas development arm, employs about 10,000 people, two-thirds of whom work overseas. It's unclear where the remaining staff stand regarding their jobs.

Under Trump's plan, some 611 employees would have been kept working at the agency. The ruling came as officials removed and covered USAID signs at the organisation's headquarters in Washington DC.

Trump has argued that USAID is not a valuable use of taxpayer money. It is one of many federal agencies his administration is targeting as it works to slash federal spending in the US.

The Republican campaigned on overhauling the government and formed an advisory body named the Department of Government Efficiency (Doge) - led by tech billionaire Elon Musk - to slash the budget.

Friday's ruling by Judge Nichols came in response to an emergency petition by the American Foreign Service Association and American Federation of Government Employees - two unions representing employees of the Judge Nichols, who was nominated by Trump during his first term, said the written order would be issued later and go into more detail.

The organisations who sued told the BBC they were waiting for the text of the court order to find out how all employees at USAID would be affecte

But for now, it appeared that the more than 2,000 direct hires at the agency who are part of the unions would be safe, according to Lauren Bateman an attorney at Public Citizen, an advocacy group that filed the lawsui

About 500 USAID staff have already been placed on leave by the Trump administratio

During the hearing, the judge did not seem likely to grant other requests as part of the lawsuit, including to restore grants and contracts or reopen USAID building

The legal action argued that the president was violating the US Constitution and federal law by attempting to dismantle the agenc

"Not a single one of defendants' actions to dismantle USAID were taken pursuant to congressional authorization," it sai
"And pursuant to federal statute, Congress is the only entity that may lawfully dismantle the agency
Representing the Trump administration, justice department official Brett Shumate told the judge that the president "has decided there is corruption and fraud at USAID"

LENS ASIA