



March 27, 2020

COVID-19 Travel Community Advisory

What you should know about the latest travel restrictions relating to COVID-19

Dear Community Members and Friends,

Recent travel restrictions stemming from the public health impact caused by the spread of the novel coronavirus and the illness resulting from it, known as “COVID-19,” have caused confusion and prompted questions from community members, including citizens, permanent residents, immigrants, students, and others.

In this advisory, issued by Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Asian Law Caucus (“ALC”) and the Council on American-Islamic Relations San Francisco Bay Area (“CAIR-SFBA”), we cover information about the nature of these travel restrictions, to whom these restrictions apply, and provide general legal guidance for community members. Please note that this information is provided as general information and not legal advice, and is subject to change due to rapidly developing conditions.

I. COVID-19 Restrictions

A. Countries Subject to COVID-19 Related Travel Restrictions

The United States government has barred the entry of certain individuals who, in the 14 day period prior to their entry into the U.S. *were physically present in* the following countries:

- China;
- Iran;
- All 26 countries located within the “Schengen Area”:
 - Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland
 - The United Kingdom (England; Wales; Scotland; Northern Ireland);
 - Republic of Ireland.

*Who is impacted by these restrictions (e.g., who **may not enter** the U.S. until these restrictions are lifted):*

- All foreign nationals, with certain exceptions listed below, who were physically present within China, Iran, any country within the Schengen Area (see list above), the United Kingdom, and/or Ireland, for any length of time, in the 14 days before their entry or attempted entry into the United States.

*Exceptions (who is **not** impacted by these restrictions):*

- U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents (“LPRs”), e.g. “green card” holders.
- Certain family members of U.S. citizens or LPRs:
 - Spouses of U.S. citizens or LPRs;
 - Children of U.S. citizens or LPRs under the age of 21;
 - Parents of unmarried U.S. citizens or LPRs who are under the age 21;
 - Siblings of U.S. citizens or LPRs provided *both* the foreign national and U.S. citizen or LPR are unmarried and under the age of 21.
- Those who were physically present in the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau.
- Those who were physically present in any of the overseas territories of the United Kingdom outside of Europe, known as “British Overseas Territories.”
- Students returning to home countries not included in any COVID-19 related restrictions, and so long as they have not visited any of the barred countries listed above (however, *this may change given rapid developments*)

B. Travel to and From Canada & Mexico

Beginning on March 21 and through April 20, the United States government has temporarily limited inbound land border crossings from Canada and Mexico to “essential travel” only.

What is considered “Essential travel”:

- U.S. citizens and LPRs continue to be permitted to enter the U.S.
- Individuals traveling for medical purposes (e.g., to receive medical treatment in the U.S.).
- Individuals traveling to attend educational institutions.
- Individuals traveling to work in the U.S.

- Individuals engaged in lawful cross-border trade.

*What is **not considered** “essential travel”:*

- Individuals traveling for tourism purposes, such as sightseeing, recreation, gambling, or attending cultural events in the U.S.

For further information and updates, please visit U.S. Embassy and Consulate websites for [Mexico](#) and [Canada](#).

II. General Community Guidance

Given COVID-19 related travel restrictions and the U.S. State Department’s [Global Level 4 Health Advisory](#) advising Americans against travel anywhere around the world, ALC and CAIR-SFBA **do not** recommend any travel at this time, whether domestic or international, and particularly advise against travel to any of the above listed countries, until further notice. *This guidance applies to U.S. citizens and LPRs* and other categories of individuals, listed above, who are otherwise permitted to enter or reenter the United States and constitute exceptions to any COVID-19 related travel restrictions.

If you or someone you know is currently stranded outside the U.S., please direct them to the Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP), a free service allowing U.S. citizens and nationals traveling and living abroad to enroll with the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. STEP allows U.S. citizen travelers to receive immediate assistance and support from the relevant embassy or consulate in the event of an emergency, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information and to enroll, please visit the [STEP](#) website.

F-1 students are permitted to engage in online learning, either in the United States or outside the country. Students are strongly advised to consult with an immigration attorney regarding student-specific visa issues.

While we advise against any travel at this time, we recommend that individuals who do not hold U.S. citizenship or LPR status consult an attorney before traveling internationally. Such guidance applies indefinitely until further notice.

III. How to Obtain Legal Advice or Assistance

Both ALC and CAIR-SFBA provide information and legal services free of charge. You may contact our organizations if:

- You or someone you know is impacted by COVID-19 related travel restrictions and would like free legal advice or assistance relating to travel or immigration issues;
- Your community would like to request a virtual “Know Your Rights” presentation.

CAIR-SFBA: 408-986-9874 or online at bit.ly/cairsfbaimmigration

ALC: 415-848-7733