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Mass visa chaos: H-1B families stranded in India for months after US consulates cancel interviews

Story by Lubna Kably • 2w • 3 min read



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Hundreds of Indians on H-1B visas, along with their H-4 dependent spouses and children, are stranded in India. In some cases, families have been separated, with some members in the US and those in India facing an endless delay to fly back.

The uproar is loud; the anguish is palpable across social-media posts and WhatsApp groups. Jobs may no longer exist, schools stand

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As TOI reported in its edition of December 10, US consulates have cancelled interview slots scheduled for mid- to late-Dec 2025. Many appointments have been pushed to March next year, and some even as far back as June 2026. This sweeping disruption followed a new US Department of State (DoS) policy requiring mandatory social-media screening for all H-1B and H-4 applicants from Dec 15. The additional vetting has sharply reduced the number of interviews that can be conducted each day, triggering mass cancellations.

The US Embassy in India posted on X: "If you have received an email advising that your visa appointment has been rescheduled, Mission India looks forward to assisting you on your new appointment date. Arriving on your previously scheduled appointment date will result in your being denied."

The responses reflect the crisis families are facing. One user pleaded: "Please consider those who travelled to India before the appointment changes. We are stuck here, facing serious challenges related to employment and our US-citizen kids' education. We humbly request earlier consular appointments."

Another wrote: "Booked my H-1B visa slot in Sept after weeks of trying. My Dec 18 appointment was suddenly moved to Mar 30, 2026. We must return to the US in early Jan and my US-citizen kids need to go back to school. Requesting urgent help."

Rajiv S. Khanna, Imanaging attorney at Immigration.com, describes the situation as "brutal chaos". He notes that while applicants may reschedule online if they cannot attend the new date, they get only one such opportunity — and fee receipts older than a year are treated as expired.

Immigration attorney Ellen Freeman warns that many H-1B workers will now lose their jobs. "We have to plead with employers to let them work from India or take prolonged leave of absence for as many as five months. In this economic environment and with deliverables pressure, many employers will not be able to wait."

She points out to the real-world fallout: "People left their apartment leases, utility bills, car payments in the US. These prolonged delays will have a devastating effect on our communities and economy. There are human stories behind each visa cancellation..."

Rahul Reddy, founding partner at Reddy, Neumann, Brown, cautions against holiday travel for anyone who needs visa stamping. In his blog, he warns that travellers risk being stranded abroad for four to six months. "Employers cannot keep an H-1B role vacant for half a year. Many cannot legally allow remote work from outside the US due to export-control, payroll and tax restrictions. This means one thing: if an H-1B worker travels now, they may return not to their job but to unemployment. H-4 spouses and children will face the same delays, leading to extended separations and tremendous stress."

Calling the policy shift "poorly planned" and "poorly implemented", he adds: "You cannot claim to support legal immigration while blindsiding H-1B families with six-month delays. Labelling this as 'operational necessity' does not change the truth: this process reflects a lack of preparation, transparency, and foresight. Enhanced vetting is fine but rolling it out in a way that effectively shuts down consular processing is reckless. Routine visa renewals should not turn into half-year exiles."

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