

DOJ shuts down 15 immigration courts across US, citing 'civil unrest'

Fifteen federal courts that handle immigration cases have been shut down by the Justice Department due to protests and violence in major U.S. cities.

The DOJ's Executive Office for Immigration Review announced immigration courts in Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Philadelphia, and Portland would be closed Tuesday due to "civil unrest" following daytime protests and overnight violence in those cities. Courts in Louisville and near San Diego, California, were also closed Tuesday, with no reason cited on the courts' websites.

The new closures come after the Justice agency on Monday closed courts in at least 17 other major cities.

The closures permit illegal immigrants who were on house arrest or allowed to make bail the ability to stay home and not have to go out and appear in court, but it also delays the legal process and increases the backlog of cases waiting to be adjudicated.

The number of people, including members of families not detained in jails, waiting for cases to go through the courts is more than 3 million.

The immigration court system is composed of 69 courts nationwide, which determine whether immigrants illegally residing in the United States should be removed from the country and rule on all other federal immigration laws, including asylum cases. Forty-four of the 69 courts are operating on a partial basis, hearing cases of immigrants detained by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

At the start of state and city closures in March due to the coronavirus outbreak, the DOJ shuttered some immigration courts and limited operations at others to stop the spread of the virus.

Source:

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