

Travel Advisory for International Students During Current Active Military Conflict

Periods of armed conflict significantly increase immigration, travel, and re-entry risks for non-immigrant visa holders. Policies may change rapidly, including:

- Travel bans or regional entry restrictions
- Visa appointment suspensions
- Enhanced secondary inspection at ports of entry
- Airline route cancellations
- Sudden consulate closures
- SEVIS compliance scrutiny

Traveling during military conflict is considered as high risk.

Primary Concerns for F-1 Students

1. Re-Entry Denial or Delay

- a. Even if you are carrying valid documents, Customs & Border Protection officers have discretion to deny you entry. This is even more so if:
 - i. You are from a country involved in conflict
 - ii. You recently changed status or schools
 - iii. You have prior history of visa overstays or gaps in your status (meaning you were not in status for a given period of time)
 - iv. You require visa renewal abroad

2. Visa Renewal Complications

- a. If your F-1 visa stamp is expired:
 - i. U.S. embassies may suspend operations
 - ii. Visa processing may be delayed indefinitely
 - iii. Administrative processing (221g) decisions may increase
 - iv. You may become stranded outside the U.S.

3. Sudden Policy Changes

- a. Executive orders or emergency measures can potentially:
 - i. Restrict nationals of certain countries (new travel bans)
 - ii. Suspend entry of certain visa categories
 - iii. Change SEVIS compliance rules and requirements
 - iv. Affect Curricular Practical Training (CPT) & Optional Practical Training (OPT) policies
- b. Note: These changes can occur with little warning.

4. Airspace & Transportation Disruptions

- a. Flights may be cancelled with minimal notice
- b. Regional airspace closures (i.e. Middle East / Central Asia)
- c. Limited return routes
- d. Increased travel costs

Strong Recommendations

Avoid Non-Essential Travel

- Students are strongly advised *not to travel internationally unless absolutely necessary* during active conflict.
- If travel is essential (family emergency, legal requirement, government mandate), consult our office prior to your departure.

Updated Required Travel Checklist

If you must travel, you must carry the following immigration documents:

- ❖ Valid passport (6+ months validity recommended)
- ❖ Valid F-1 visa stamp (unless Canadian citizen)
- ❖ Signed I-20 (travel signature within 12 months; 6 months for OPT)
- ❖ Enrollment verification letter (from the Registrar)
- ❖ Transcript (unofficial is acceptable)
- ❖ Financial documentation (i.e. bank statements & affidavits of support)
- ❖ OPT EAD card (if applicable)
- ❖ Employment offer letter (if on OPT)

Assess Your Level of Risk

Be aware and ask yourself:

- ✓ Is my visa expired?
- ✓ Is my I-20 expiring soon?
- ✓ Am I from a country under sanctions?
- ✓ Is my home country involved in conflict?
- ✓ Am I within 90 days of program completion?
- ✓ Do I have pending USCIS applications?

If “yes” to any of these questions, then travel risk increases substantially.

Students from Conflict Zones

Students whose home countries are directly involved in conflict face an elevated risk, including being subject to:

- Travel bans or sanctions
- Banking restrictions
- Security screening delays
- Potential future policy changes

In your best interest, you should consult with our office or an immigration attorney (if risk factors apply).

If you need an immigration attorney, you can search for one from the American Immigration Lawyers Association (A.I.L.A.) at the following link: <https://www.aialawyer.com/>.

OPT & STEM OPT Students

OPT students are particularly vulnerable because:

- You are not actively enrolled as a student
- You must maintain employment reporting
- Extended absence may impact future employment limits
- Re-entry scrutiny will be higher
- Increased difficulty in visa renewal processes

Travel during OPT is not recommended during conditions of active conflict unless absolutely necessary.

Emergency Preparedness Before Departure

If you do decide to travel:

- Leave copies of documents with a trusted contact
- Register with your home country embassy (if safe and operational)
- Enroll in U.S. State Department Smart Traveler Enrollment (S.T.E.P.) Program: <https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/travel-advisories/smart-traveler-enrollment-program.html>
- Purchase flexible tickets
- Have emergency funds
- Monitor your local U.S. Embassy updates daily

Important Reminder

Re-entry to the U.S. is never guaranteed.

Final admission decisions are made by:

- U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS)

The university cannot intervene in port-of-entry decisions.

When Travel May Be Safer

Travel may carry lower risk if:

- You have a valid unexpired F-1 visa
- You are continuing full-time enrollment
- You are traveling to a country not involved in conflict
- No sanctions or travel bans apply to your nationality

Even in these cases, the risk does remain elevated.

Recommended Actions

Before booking travel:

1. Schedule an appointment with the Office of International Education.
2. Confirm documents' validity.
3. Review current U.S. State Department travel advisories.
4. Monitor USCIS and DHS announcements.

Final Advisory Statement

Due to rapidly evolving global conditions currently, F-1 students are advised to avoid non-essential international travel. The immigration environment may change without advance notice, and re-entry cannot be guaranteed.