



## **DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

### **Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Belize for Cooperation Regarding the Examination of Protection Requests**

**AGENCY:** Department of Homeland Security

**ACTION:** Notice of Agreement

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Homeland Security is publishing the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Belize for Cooperation Regarding the Examination of Protection Requests, signed at Belmopan on October 20, 2025 (the “Agreement”). The text of the Agreement is set out below.

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James H. Percival II  
General Counsel,  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

**AGREEMENT BETWEEN**  
**THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**AND**  
**THE GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE**  
**FOR COOPERATION REGARDING THE EXAMINATION OF PROTECTION**  
**REQUESTS**

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and THE GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE, hereinafter referred to individually as a "Party" or collectively as "the Parties,"

**DESIRING TO** enhance mutually beneficial cooperation and to ensure the dignified, safe, and timely transfer from the United States of America to Belize of third country nationals who may seek protection against return to their home country or country of former habitual residence;

**CONSIDERING** that Belize regulates its relations with other states in accordance with international principles, rules, and practices, with the purpose of contributing to the maintenance of peace and freedom, the respect and defence of human rights, and the strengthening of democratic processes and international institutions that guarantee the mutual and equitable benefit among the states, and that Belize maintains relations of friendship, solidarity, and cooperation with those states whose economic, social, and cultural development is analogous to that of Belize;

**CONSIDERING FURTHER** that Belize is a party to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, done at Geneva July 28, 1951 (the "1951 Convention"), the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, done at New York January 31, 1967 (the "1967 Protocol"), and the Convention against Torture and Other Treatment or Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Penalties, done at New York December 10, 1984 (the "Convention Against Torture"), and that the United States of America is a party to the 1967 Protocol and Convention against Torture, and

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reaffirming the obligation of the Parties to provide protection in accordance with their respective obligations under those treaties, subject to their respective reservations, understandings, and declarations;

**RECOGNIZING**, in particular, the obligation of the Parties to comply with the principle of nonrefoulement, as outlined in the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol, as well as the Convention Against Torture, subject to the Parties' respective reservations, understandings, and declarations and reaffirming their respective responsibility to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms consistent with their international obligations;

**RECOGNIZING FURTHER** the Parties' respective obligations under any other international agreements and their national constitutions laws, regulations, and immigration and visa policies;

**UNDERSCORING** that the Parties offer protection systems that are consistent with their respective obligations under the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol, and the Convention Against Torture;

**CONVINCED**, in keeping with advice from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its Executive Committee, that agreements among states may enhance the international protection of refugees by promoting the orderly handling of asylum applications and the principle of burden-sharing;

**DETERMINED** to maintain access to a full and fair procedure for determining a claim to refugee or asylum status or equivalent temporary protection, as an essential aspect of the protection of refugees or asylees, and at the same time wishing to prevent fraud in the refugee or asylum application process, which undermines its legitimate purpose, and to strengthen the

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integrity of the process for requesting asylum or refugee status as well as public support for that process; and

**AWARE** that the cooperation described herein is expected to ensure in practice that persons in need of international protection are identified and that breaches of the fundamental principle of nonrefoulement are avoided, and therefore determined to safeguard access to a full and fair procedure for determining claims for refugee status or equivalent temporary protection as a means to guarantee that the protections of the 1951 Convention, 1967 Protocol, and Convention Against Torture are effectively afforded,

**AGREE** as follows:

#### **ARTICLE I**

For the purposes of this Agreement:

1. "Protection Request" means the request of a person from Central America (excluding Guatemala) and Caribbean Community member states in accordance with their respective international obligations under the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol, or the Convention Against Torture, and in accordance with the respective laws and policies of the Parties as well as any other type of equivalent temporary protection available under Belizean immigration law.
2. "Protection Applicant" means any person who is a citizen or national of a Central American country (excluding Guatemala) or Caribbean Community member states who submits a Protection Request before one of the Parties.
3. "Protection Determination System" means the set of laws, policies, and administrative and judicial practices that each Party uses to make a decision on Protection Requests.

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4. "Unaccompanied Minor" refers to a Protection Applicant who has not reached the age of eighteen (18) and who does not have a parent or legal guardian present and available to provide care and custody in the country where the Unaccompanied Minor is located, whether in the United States or in Belize.

## ARTICLE 2

1. The Government of the United States of America, in furtherance of the mutually beneficial cooperation between the Parties, and in its complete discretion, may propose to the Government of Belize the transfer of Protection Applicants.
2. The Government of Belize shall consider accepting, in its complete discretion, in whole or in part, the transfer of Protection Applicants proposed by the Government of the United States of America in accordance with this Agreement. The Government of Belize may consider, among other factors, the professional skills or criminal history of an individual proposed for transfer.
3. The Government of the United States of America shall not propose citizens or nationals of Belize or individuals who, having no country of nationality, are or were habitual residents of Belize.
4. The Government of the United States of America shall not transfer Unaccompanied Minors pursuant to this Agreement.

## ARTICLE 3

Both Parties' actions under this Agreement shall be in accordance with their obligations under the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol, the Convention Against Torture, and any other respective international obligations, national constitutions, laws, regulations, and immigration and visa

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policies of the Parties, including consideration by the Government of Belize of requests by Protection Applicants for asylum, refugee protection, or equivalent temporary protection.

#### **ARTICLE 4**

The Parties may exchange information when necessary for the effective implementation of this Agreement, subject to their respective national laws and regulations. Such information shall not be disclosed by the recipient country except in accordance with its national laws and regulations.

#### **ARTICLE 5**

1. To ensure that Protection Applicants transferred to Belize by the United States of America have access to a Protection Determination System, the Government of Belize agrees not to return any person transferred to Belize by the Government of the United States of America to their home country or country of former habitual residence until a final decision has been made regarding any Protection Request made to the Government of Belize.
2. The Government of Belize shall determine a procedure, consistent with its relevant obligations, to resolve the status of those who may abandon pending claims or fail to seek protection.

#### **ARTICLE 6**

1. The Parties shall develop operating procedures to assist with the implementation of this Agreement. These procedures shall incorporate a provision on the process through which the Government of the United States will notify the Government of Belize in advance of the transfer of any person pursuant to this Agreement to enable

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Belize to confirm the identity of the individuals to be transferred to Belize's territory.

2. The Parties may regularly evaluate this Agreement and its implementation to correct any deficiencies found. The evaluations may be carried out jointly by the Parties. The Parties may invite, by mutual decision, other relevant organizations with specialized knowledge on the subject, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, to participate in such evaluation(s).
3. In the event of a conflict of interpretation or implementation, the Parties commit to resolve such matters through dialogue or diplomatic channels.
4. The Parties intend for the operating procedures to contain gradual steps, and address, among other things: (a) procedures necessary to effectuate the transfer of individuals under this Agreement and (b) institutional capacity requirements. The Parties plan to operationalize this Agreement upon the completion of the operating procedures.

#### **ARTICLE 7**

1. This Agreement shall enter into force on the date of the latter note in an exchange of notes between the Parties indicating that each Party has completed the necessary domestic legal procedures for the Agreement to enter into force, for the term of two (2) years, renewable before its expiration with the exchange of diplomatic notes.
  2. Either Party may terminate or suspend this Agreement at any time by notifying the other Party in writing. KB
  3. The Parties may agree in writing to any amendments to this Agreement, and such amendments shall constitute an integral part of this Agreement, consistent with any applicable legal requirements. R.F.
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4. Nothing set forth in this Agreement shall be interpreted in such a way that commits the disbursement or allocation of funds by the Parties. The implementation of this Agreement shall be subject to the availability of funds and technical capacity of each Party. The Government of the United States of America, upon request, shall endeavour, in accordance with applicable law and regulations, to provide financial and technical assistance to strengthen the institutional capacities of the Government of Belize.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned, duly authorised by their respective governments, have signed this Agreement.

DONE at Belmopan on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, 2025, in duplicate, in the English language.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF  
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF  
BELIZE

Kathleen M. R. Beamer

[Signature]