



Members of the European Parliament

JOINT STATEMENT ON DHS PROPOSAL ON “I VISAS”

Brussels, October 2020

A proposal to change the way the US manages visas for foreign journalists threatens to seriously jeopardise the exercise of journalistic freedom. We, the undersigned, urge the Department for Homeland Security to drop this proposal.

The “I visa” is required for all foreign journalists operating in the US, whether they are there for one week or five years. Once issued it is valid for up to five years, allowing journalists to work there continuously or travel in and out of the US for assignments. The proposal by the Department for Homeland Security to limit the visa to 240 days, with a possible extension of a maximum of 240 days, would seriously impact the work of the foreign media in covering the news in the US. Furthermore, the proposal is unclear about how the decision about a possible extension would be reached and what would happen after the extension period has elapsed.

Many foreign news organisations have a permanent presence in the US by sending correspondents there for a number of years (commonly 2-5 years). This period of time allows the individual journalists to better understand the country and therefore better report on it to the rest of the world. Restricting the time they could stay to a maximum duration of 480 days carries a substantial risk to good and continuous coverage of the US by media from around the globe.

The First Amendment of the US constitution is the backbone to its reputation for freedom of speech and of the press. This proposal risks damaging not only these important freedoms but also the US’s reputation globally as a free and open democracy. It would as well reduce the opportunities for the world to better understand the US.

We, the undersigned, remain firmly committed to supporting accurate and unbiased news reporting for a global audience. We therefore ask the US administration to continue to support a sustainable framework safeguarding media freedom.

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