

Immigration Regulatory Updates

APRIL 2025

In this edition, we bring you timely updates and critical insights into evolving immigration developments both within Nigeria and globally. From newly introduced reforms by the Nigerian Ministry of Interior aimed at digitising and streamlining immigration processes, to the U.S. Mission's updated visa application requirements, and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority's response to rising cases of denied boarding and deportation, this newsletter provides a comprehensive overview to help individuals and organisations stay informed and compliant.

We also cover Saudi Arabia's temporary suspension of visa issuance to Nigeria and 13 other countries in the lead-up to the Hajj pilgrimage, as well as the Nigeria Immigration Service's expansion of its Contactless Biometric Passport System across key locations.

Nigeria Implements Key Immigration Reforms – Effective 1st May 2025

On 11th April 2025, the Honourable Minister of Interior announced a suite of transformative reforms aimed at modernising Nigeria's immigration system. The reforms, unveiled during an engagement with stakeholders from the organised private sector, including the Nigeria Employers' Consultative Association (NECA) and the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA), will take effect from **1st May 2025**.

Highlights of the Reforms:

1. E-Visa Platform Launch:

Introduction of a digital visa issuance platform guaranteeing visa processing within **48 hours** for eligible applicants, particularly benefiting short-term business travellers.

2. Digitalisation of Expatriate Processes:

Full transition of the Expatriate Quota (EQ) and CERPAC (Combined Expatriate Residence Permit and Aliens Card) systems to an online platform.

Key features include:

- QR-coded digital permits
- Backend integration with security databases
- Reduced paperwork and increased transparency

3. Understudy Progress Reporting:

Companies are now required to submit periodic progress reports on the understudy of expatriates to promote local capacity development and ensure knowledge transfer to Nigerian employees.

4. Mandatory Expatriate Insurance Scheme:

An insurance policy covering **repatriation and personal liability** is now compulsory, aligning with global best practices and relieving the government of associated costs.

5. Pro-rated CERPAC Fees:

A fairer system is being introduced for **short-term expatriates**, allowing **prorated CERPAC** payments instead of a full annual fee.

6. Digital Landing and Exit Cards:

Physical cards have now been replaced with **online landing and exit forms**, which travellers must complete prior to arrival or departure.

7. Overstay Penalty and Amnesty Period:

From **1st August 2025**, a **\$5 per day fine** and potential long-term **entry bans** will apply to individuals who overstay their visas.

A **three-month amnesty window (1st May – 1st August 2025)** will allow overstayers to regularise their status without penalty.

These reforms mark a significant step toward building a transparent, secure, and investor-friendly immigration environment in Nigeria. Famsville remains available to guide clients through compliance and application transitions.

New U.S. Visa Application Requirements for Nigeria

The U.S. Mission in Nigeria has introduced updated requirements for visa applicants at its Abuja and Lagos embassies, effective from **April 22, 2025**:

- All visa applicants must present a **DS-160 form** with a **confirmation/barcode** number beginning with **"AA" followed by "00"** that matches the one used to schedule their visa appointment.

- Appointments must be booked at the **same location** (Abuja or Lagos) indicated on the DS-160 form.
- Applicants with **mismatched barcode numbers** will be **denied entry** to the Consular Section and will not be interviewed.
- At least **two weeks before** the scheduled interview, applicants should verify that the **barcode number on their DS-160 matches** the appointment details.
- Previously **used DS-160 forms are not valid** for new appointments.
- Applicants who need to correct a mismatched DS-160 barcode must log into their **AVITS account** and submit a **support ticket** at least 10 days before the appointment.
- If denied entry due to a mismatch, **a new appointment must be scheduled**. If the visa fee has expired, **a new fee may be required** before rescheduling.

Nigeria Immigration Service Expands Contactless Biometric Passport Application System

The Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) has announced the next phase in the global roll-out of its **Contactless Biometric Passport Application System**, aimed at simplifying passport renewal for Nigerians in the diaspora.

Effective April 2025, the system is now available in the following countries:

- **USA** – from 11th April 2025
- **Mexico, Jamaica, and Brazil** – from 14th April 2025

The **NIS Mobile App**, currently available on the Google Play Store, enables Nigerians to renew their passports without visiting passport centres for biometric enrolment. An Apple version and enhanced app features for both iOS and Android are expected soon. The app is now accessible in **Canada, the USA, Mexico, Jamaica, Brazil, Europe, and Asia**, with roll-out to **Australia and Nigeria** forthcoming.

This move reflects the NIS's commitment to delivering innovative and efficient service to Nigerians worldwide.

Saudi Arabia Suspends Visa Issuance to Nigeria and 13 Other Countries

The Government of Saudi Arabia has announced a **temporary suspension** of Umrah (the Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca), business, and family visit visas for nationals of 14 countries, including Nigeria. This decision is part of the Kingdom's broader efforts to prepare for the upcoming **Hajj pilgrimage**, and aims to prevent unregistered individuals from attempting to participate in the holy event.

Each year, millions of Muslims from around the world travel to Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj. However, in 2024, Saudi authorities reported that approximately 400,000

unregistered pilgrims participated in the pilgrimage. Tragically, over **1,000 pilgrims** died, with the majority of fatalities attributed to heat-related causes. A significant number of the deceased were pilgrims who lacked official Hajj permits.

Additionally, concerns have been raised over the growing number of visitors who **overstay their visas**, leading to overcrowding and heightened safety risks in key pilgrimage sites.

The Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs has stated that the visa suspension is intended “**to streamline travel procedures and enhance safety during Hajj.**”

The countries affected by this suspension are:

Nigeria, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Algeria, Sudan, Ethiopia, Tunisia, Yemen, and Morocco.

Denied Boarding and Deportation of Nigerians on International Travels

The Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) has issued a press statement addressing recent complaints from airline passengers regarding instances of denied boarding and deportation of Nigerians during international travel.

According to the NCAA, several airlines have been reported for selling tickets to Nigerian passengers, only to deny them boarding at transit points or deport them mid-journey due to visa or travel restrictions. These incidents have caused significant distress to travellers and continue to damage the reputation of Nigeria's aviation industry.

In many cases, the denial of boarding or entry at intermediate or transit stops is attributed to passengers not meeting visa requirements. To mitigate such disruptions, airlines are now being urged to adopt a transparent approach by properly informing and educating passengers about the visa policies of all transit and final destinations.

In line with the **Nigerian Civil Aviation Regulations 2023**, all airlines and their agents are mandated to ensure that passengers are made aware of any potential admissibility issues or travel restrictions **prior to departure**. This includes verifying and communicating accurate, up-to-date information regarding travel documentation and visa requirements **before issuing tickets and allowing boarding**.

Passengers are also strongly advised to acquaint themselves with the visa requirements for all stops on their itinerary before booking their flights, in order to avoid unnecessary delays or deportation.

Furthermore, the NCAA has now introduced penalties for non-compliance. Effective immediately, any airline found to be involved in such practices will face regulatory actions, which may include fines, suspension of flight operations, or any other sanctions deemed appropriate.

At Famsville, we remain committed to supporting clients in navigating these changes seamlessly. As always, we encourage you to reach out for guidance on compliance, visa processing, or any immigration-related matter

Should you require further assistance or clarification on the above, please feel free to contact pamilerin.akabunwa@famsvillelaw.com

Stay connected with us on all our social media platforms, ***LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter.***

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