News



A Catholic Relief Services worker is pictured in a file photo helping a young woman at a food distribution area in Marojela village, located in the Marolinta commune in southern Madagascar's Beloha District. (OSV News/Jim Stipe, Courtesy of Catholic Relief Services)

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The U.S. Supreme Court Sept. 9 paused a judge's order requiring President Donald Trump's administration to spend billions in previously approved foreign aid the president has sought to rescind.

Chief Justice John Roberts issued an administrative stay, a legal mechanism that gives the justices time to review the case and a lower court's order that the Trump administration could not unilaterally cancel the funds.

Donald Kerwin, Jesuit Refugee Service/USA's vice president for advocacy, research and partnerships, told OSV News, "However the case is ultimately resolved, it combines two troubling issues: first, the administration's attempt to usurp Congress' constitutional authority to appropriate funds for particular purposes, and second, its opposition to international humanitarian assistance, which saves lives, affirms human dignity and has been one of America's greatest contributions to building a world in which more people are free to determine their own futures."

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"The administration's continued attacks on foreign aid have already led to easily preventable deaths," Kerwin said. "These deaths and the immense damage worked by these cuts to the prospects of millions of people will persist absent greater public understanding of this ongoing tragedy, and without pressure on the administration and Congress to reverse course."

The Trump administration has broadly sought to scale back foreign assistance. In a rare procedural move called a "pocket rescission," Trump in August told House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., he would cancel $5 billion in foreign aid and nongovernmental organization funding previously approved by Congress just before the end of the fiscal year.

Groups including the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition sued in response.

When the Trump administration asked the Supreme Court to intervene on a lower court's order blocking the cuts, Solicitor General D. John Sauer argued, "The president can hardly speak with one voice in foreign affairs or in dealings with Congress when the district court is forcing the executive branch to advocate against its own objectives."

Some of those funds were for the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, which the Trump administration shuttered while moving some of its remaining functions under the State Department.

Catholic Relief Services, the overseas relief and development agency of the Catholic Church in the U.S., was among the Catholic entities that previously had partnered with USAID.