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# When human rights switch sides—what does the US "mass migration" dispatch really mean?



The **US State Department** has sent an internal dispatch to embassies in Europe, Canada, and Australia that fundamentally changes the way migration is discussed.

This change does not occur all at once but through a series of carefully crafted instructions.

The dispatch asks that diplomatic missions actively push local governments to take a stronger approach to migration, connect migration to higher crime rates and social instabilities, and gather examples of cases where the offenders are migrants or come from migrant backgrounds.

**Reuters** published this document, raising a question that goes far beyond daily politics: what does it mean when a major power systematically changes the meaning of words that have formed the foundation of international law for decades?

## How changing language redefines migration policy

The most significant change in the dispatch concerns the language. **Migration** is described as an "existential threat" and as a phenomenon that "endangers the human rights of citizens of host countries."

This marks a break with the previous understanding of human rights, which was based on protecting individuals from violence, persecution, and discrimination.

Now, the same phrase is being used with an entirely different meaning, as an argument for restricting the arrival of people fleeing wars, poverty, or political oppression.

**The problem is not only that the interpretation changes but also how the "evidence" is constructed**

When the government changes the way it describes refugees in a diplomatic document,

from protection to restriction, it also changes its policy towards them.

The problem is not only that the interpretation changes but also how the "evidence" is constructed.

The dispatch does not ask embassies for comprehensive analyses, comparisons, or statistical data. It only seeks examples that fit a predetermined conclusion.

Diplomats must document incidents involving suspected migrants, contextualise them to support the security threat narrative, and forward it to Washington.

Reuters emphasises that there is no solid empirical basis linking migration to increased crime, but this is not mentioned in the dispatch. Only one segment is highlighted, while the rest is omitted.

## A tool for shaping perception rather than analysis

Implementing such a practice within a diplomatic network as extensive as the American one produces a very specific effect.

Over time, hundreds or thousands of selectively chosen examples accumulate to form an archive that may appear to substantiate a strong thesis, even though it represents only a filtered cross-section.

In a political environment where public opinion often responds to emotional rather than statistical impulses, such material becomes a tool for shaping perception rather than for analysis. This is precisely what distinguishes ordinary administrative instruction from strategy.

**US embassies in Paris, Berlin, Ottawa, London, and other capitals are tasked with speaking openly to governments about the "dangers of mass migration"**

Another aspect of this issue concerns the allies themselves. According to the dispatch, US embassies in Paris, Berlin, Ottawa, London, and other capitals are tasked with speaking openly to governments about the "**dangers of mass migration**".

In practice, this means shifting rhetorical boundaries. When the United States ambassador tells an interlocutor that migrants pose a security risk, that message does not remain confined to that conversation.

It influences the tone of public debate and the way migration policy is conducted in that country. It becomes part of the host country's political discourse. In countries where migration is already heavily politicised, this signal carries additional weight.

Not because ambassadors shape laws, but because they create the impression that the most powerful country in the world shares views with local actors who see migration solely as a security issue.

## Political interpretations replace original meaning

The dispatch appears as the **administration in Washington** is reviewing the status of hundreds of thousands of refugees who entered the US between 2021 and 2025.

The processing of their applications for permanent residence has been suspended, and additional security checks have been initiated following an incident involving a **suspect of Afghan nationality**.

Therefore, the diplomatic message to the allies is not separate from domestic politics. It is a continuation of the same approach – migration as a matter of internal security, not as part of international obligations.

**Political interpretations replace their original meaning, thereby diminishing the real power of such norms**

This approach has potential consequences far beyond US relations with migrants. If restricting migration begins to be presented as an act of human rights protection, then eventually that language will spill over into other areas.

International rules on the protection of refugees can be weakened even without formal changes – it is sufficient that, in practice, they are applied differently than originally intended.

Political interpretations replace their original meaning, thereby diminishing the real power of such norms.

## A humanitarian framework overshadowed by the language of security

However, the most significant consequence concerns the reshaping of alliances. The Western order, established after the Second World War, was based on the idea that the focus of human rights is the protection of the individual against the abuse of power.



*The US views migration primarily through a security framework and risk assessment, not as a humanitarian obligation*

If that premise changes, the way disputes are handled in international institutions, how resolutions are drafted, and how collective decisions are made will also change. This dispatch is the first clear indication that change is already underway.

In Europe, this type of message is most evident in discussions about new **migration rules**, where the humanitarian framework is increasingly overshadowed by the language of security.

If the most important American foreign policy apparatus adopts the same language, it is difficult to expect European governments to continue adhering to the old model. American policy towards migration is becoming increasingly apparent.

The dispatch sent by the State Department to the embassies aligns with actions Washington has been taking for months.

All these decisions convey a consistent message: the US views migration primarily through a security framework and risk assessment, not as a humanitarian obligation.

The dispatch reveals a shift in the way the US views migration. Such changes quickly become operational rules outside the US system as well. That is why this document is particularly noteworthy.