



A woman waves a "Christians for USAID" poster Feb. 5, 2025, at a rally near the U.S. Capitol supporting the U.S. Agency for International Development, known as USAID. The agency, a top funder of Catholic Relief Services and other humanitarian work worldwide, is under threat as the Trump administration moves to dismantle it. (NCR photo/Rhina Guidos)

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The Supreme Court on March 5 rejected the Trump administration's request to freeze nearly \$2 billion in foreign aid payments, directing the White House to abide by a lower court order. [Catholic nongovernmental organizations](#) are among those impacted by the freeze.

Writing for a divided 5-4 majority, Chief Justice John Roberts wrote that the Trump administration must comply with the lower court's order. However, the lower courts should also "clarify what obligations the government must fulfill to ensure compliance" with its directive.

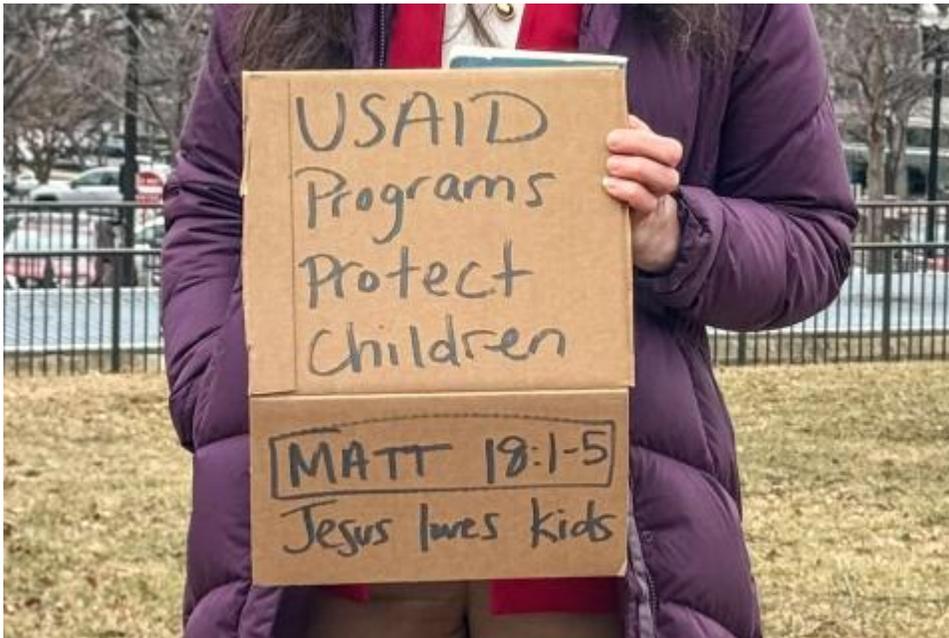
Before today's order, Trump's freeze already had impacted the work of [Catholic Relief Services](#), the overseas relief and development arm of the Catholic Church in the U.S., and [other faith-based entities](#) around the globe that have partnered with USAID in their work abroad.

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Previously, U.S. District Judge Amir H. Ali in Washington ordered the government to resume more than \$1.5 billion in foreign aid payments for already completed aid work that have been suspended for several weeks in response to a challenge from some aid organizations.

The March 5 ruling split the court's perceived ideological wings. Roberts and Justice Amy Coney Barrett joined Justices Elena Kagan, Sonia Sotomayor and Ketanji Brown Jackson in the majority.

Writing in a dissent for the minority, Justice Samuel Alito asked, "Does a single district-court judge who likely lacks jurisdiction have the unchecked power to compel the government of the United States to pay out (and probably lose forever) \$2 billion taxpayer dollars?"



A woman holds a sign at a protest in Washington on Feb. 5. The administration's attempt to dismantle USAID is "hurting the cause of caring for the poor and needy," she said. (NCR/Rhina Guidos)

"The answer to that question should be an emphatic 'No,' but a majority of this court apparently thinks otherwise," he wrote. "I am stunned."

Justices Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh joined the dissent.

Shortly after his second inauguration, Trump issued a wide-ranging pause on foreign aid. Within weeks, his administration dismantled the U.S. Agency for International Development, the government's humanitarian aid agency in countries worldwide.

Aid organizations challenging the pause argued the administration should keep the government's commitments, while the Trump administration argued the lower court judge overstepped his authority in ordering the payments.

The high court's order comes after it temporarily paused the lower court's order so it could review the case.

This story appears in the **Trump's Second Term** feature series. [View the full series.](#)