

US sues SpaceX for alleged hiring discrimination against refugees and others

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The SpaceX headquarters is seen, May 25, 2012, in Hawthorne, Calif. On Thursday, Aug. 24, 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice filed suit against SpaceX, the rocket company founded and run by Elon Musk, for alleged hiring discrimination against refugees and people seeking or already granted asylum. Credit: AP Photo/Jae C. Hong, File

The U.S. Department of Justice on Thursday sued SpaceX, the rocket

company founded and run by Elon Musk, for alleged hiring discrimination against refugees and people seeking or already granted asylum.

The complaint, filed in an administrative court within the department, asserts that SpaceX wrongly claimed that federal export control laws barred it from hiring anyone but U.S. citizens and permanent residents. As a result, it discouraged refugees and [asylum seekers](#) and grantees from applying for jobs at the company, according to the complaint.

Export controls typically aim to protect U.S. national security and to further national trade objectives. They bar the shipment of specific technologies, weapons, information and software to specific non-U.S. nations and also limit the sharing or release of such items and information to "U.S. persons." But the Justice Department noted that the term includes not only U.S. citizens, but also [permanent U.S. residents, refugees, and those seeking or granted asylum](#).

The department charged that SpaceX also refused to "fairly" consider applications from this group of people or to hire them. The positions in question included both ones requiring advanced degrees and others such as welders, cooks and crane operators at the company.



The U.S. Department of Justice logo is seen on a podium following a news conference in the office of the U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland in Baltimore, March 1, 2017. On Thursday, Aug. 24, 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice filed suit against SpaceX, the rocket company founded and run by Elon Musk, for alleged hiring discrimination against refugees and people seeking or already granted asylum. Credit: AP Photo/Patrick Semansky, File

The U.S. is seeking "fair consideration and back pay" for people who were deterred from or denied employment at SpaceX due to the company's alleged discrimination, in addition to undetermined civil penalties.

SpaceX, which is based in Hawthorne, California, did not reply to a request for comment.

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