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U.S. NEWS

What we know about the visa obtained by Egyptian man who injured a dozen people in Colorado



BY ELLIOT SPAGAT

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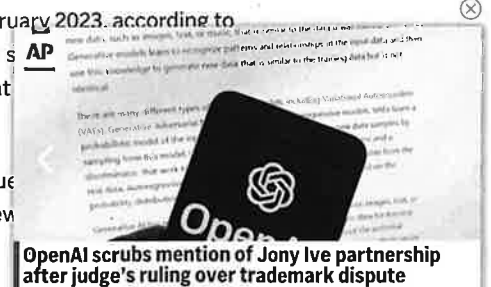
The Egyptian man charged with injuring a dozen people in Boulder, Colorado, in an attack on demonstrators seeking the release of Israeli hostages is among hundreds of thousands of people known to overstay their visas each year in the United States.

Mohamed Sabry Soliman, 45, was born in Egypt and moved three years ago to Colorado Springs, where he lived with his wife and five children, according to state court documents. He lived for 17 years in Kuwait.

Soliman entered the country in August 2022 on a tourist visa that expired in February 2023, according to Tricia McLaughlin, spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security. She said in September 2022 and was granted a work authorization in March 2023, but that department did not respond to requests for additional information.

Federal immigration authorities took Soliman's wife and children into custody Tuesday. Secretary Kristi Noem said authorities were investigating whether his family knew

What is known about visa overstays?



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There were 565,155 visa overstays from October 2022 through September 2023 among visitors who arrived by plane or ship — more than the population of the metro areas of Reno, Nevada, or Chattanooga, Tennessee, according to Homeland Security's [most recent annual report](#).

The total number of overstays is much larger but has not been quantified because it does not include how many people arrive and leave by land. The cost and technological hurdles to develop a checkout system at congested land crossings are enormous.

The overstay rate for Egyptians on business or tourist visas was 4% in 2023, well below some of the biggest offenders such as Chad (49%), Laos (34%) and Sudan (26%).

Historically, academics have [estimated that roughly 40%](#) of people in the United States illegally stayed past their visas, but reliable numbers are difficult to come by. In 2016, Homeland Security published the number of overstays for the first time in at least two decades.

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How did Soliman obtain a work permit?

Homeland Security did not say.

But asylum seekers become eligible for work authorization 180 days after arrival. That correlates with him arriving in the country in August 2022 and obtaining the work permit in March 2023.

Some critics say work permits create a huge magnet for asylum applications from people with weak cases. Immigration courts are backlogged with about 3.6 million cases, which can take years to resolve.

The relative ease with which asylum seekers gain work permits has also [fueled some tensions](#) with people who have been in the country illegally for years or decades.

Immigration court records are not public, and the status of Soliman's asylum case is unclear.

Egyptians had an asylum grant rate of 72% during the 12-month period through September 2024, compared with 45% for all nationalities, according to the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse.

