

POLITICS EDUCATION

These Are the Students Targeted by Trump’s Immigration Enforcement Over Campus Activism

ADD TIME ON GOOGLE

Show me more content from TIME on Google Search



Protestors gather to demand the release of Mahmoud Khalil, a Columbia University graduate student and Palestinian activist detained by ICE, in New York City on Mar. 10, 2025. David Dee Delgado—Getty Images

by **Miranda Jeyaretnam** REPORTER

Updated: APR 1, 2025 8:56 AM CUT

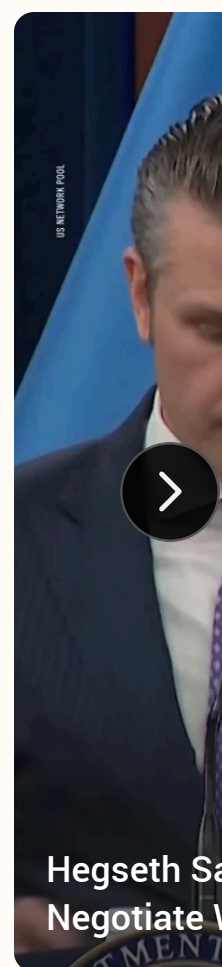
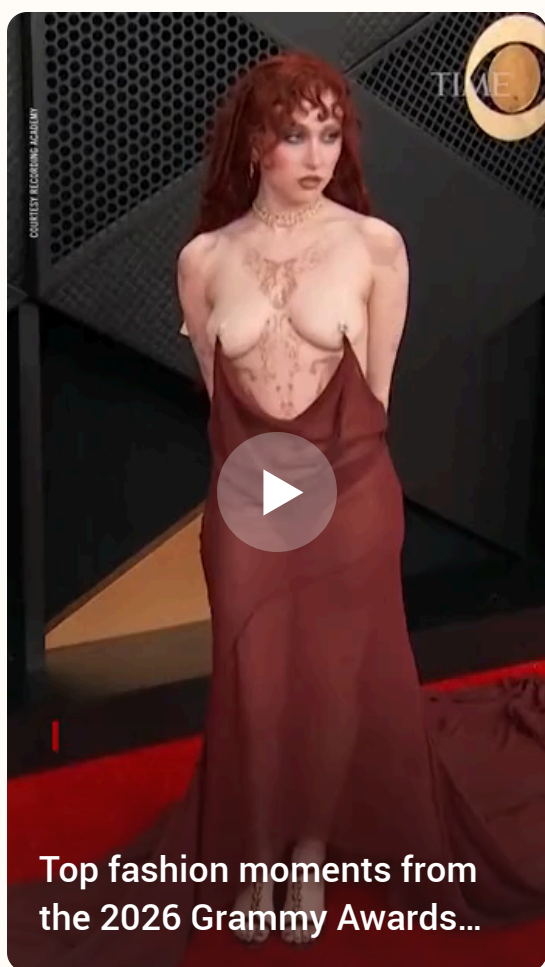
Published: MAR 27, 2025 9:55 AM CUT

A husband and expectant father; a former high school valedictorian; an architect and adjunct professor of urban planning, and a former Fulbright Scholar with a passion for child education. All legally residing in the U.S.

They're also just some of the targets of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in recent weeks as part of a campaign by President Donald Trump's Administration to detain and deport noncitizens over their pro-Palestinian campus activism.

Trending Shorts

MORE >



"This is the first arrest of many to come," Trump said in a [post on Truth Social](#), following the arrest of Palestinian graduate student [Mahmoud Khalil](#). "If you support terrorism, including the slaughtering of innocent men, women, and children, your presence is contrary to our national and foreign policy interests, and you are not welcome here. We expect every one of America's Colleges and Universities to comply."

At least 300 international students who are “destabilizing” college campuses have had their visas revoked, Secretary of State Marco Rubio said at a press conference on March 27. “Maybe more, it might be more than 300 at this point,” Rubio said. “At some point I hope we run out because we’ve gotten rid of all of them, but we’re looking every day for these lunatics that are tearing things up.”

The effort has raised questions about free speech and the rights of legal noncitizens, and it’s prompted legal challenges and protests in support of the targeted students.

Advertisement

CNN’s Jake Tapper said in a post on X on March 31 that, when asked about the evidence against the international students being targeted, a senior state official told him on background that “every individual who has had their visa recently revoked by this administration has displayed problematic behavior that would have made them ineligible for a visa if they would have disclosed this information during the vetting process.”

The effort has raised questions about free speech and the rights of legal noncitizens, and it’s prompted legal challenges and protests in support of the targeted students.

Here’s what we know about some of the students who have been targeted by ICE so far:

A student at Minnesota State University, Mankato

An international student at Minnesota State University, Mankato, was detained at an off-campus residence on March 28, the school’s president Edward Inch said in a campus-wide email on March 31, without naming the student.

Advertisement

According to the school’s student newspaper, no reason was given for the student’s arrest and the university had not received any information from ICE.

“Our international students play an important role in our campus and community,” the statement said. “This actions hurts what we try to accomplish as a university—supporting all learners to receive the education they desire to make the impact they want in their communities.”

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz posted on X that he is working to get more information from DHS, after another international student in Minnesota was detained on March 27. “The University of Minnesota is an international destination for education and research,” he wrote. “We have any number of students studying here with visas, and we need answers.”

Rumeysa Ozturk

A federal judge in Massachusetts ruled on March 28 that Turkish international student Rumeysa Ozturk can’t be deported without a court order. Ozturk, 30, was on a valid F-1 visa for her PhD studies at Tufts University in Boston when she became another high-profile target of ICE after her arrest, which witnesses caught on video, outside her home in Somerville, Mass., on the night of March 25.

Advertisement



Ozturk was walking alone on a sidewalk, on her way back home after meeting friends for iftar, a meal to break fast at sunset during Ramadan, when a plainclothes officer, wearing a hat and a hoodie, approached her, surveillance video obtained from a neighbor and posted on X on Wednesday shows. The officer grabbed Ozturk by the arms, causing her to yell out, before five other plainclothes officers approached her. One officer pulled out a concealed badge and confiscated her cell phone. The officers told her, “We’re the police.” A person off camera could be heard saying, “You don’t look like it, why are you hiding your faces? How do I know this is the police?” while the officers—who wore cloth face masks—escorted Ozturk to a black SUV. The entire encounter lasted just under two minutes.

Advertisement

Ozturk obtained a degree in psychology and Turkish language and literature from Istanbul Şehir University before coming to the U.S. in 2018 on a Fulbright Scholarship to earn a master’s in developmental and child psychology from Columbia University’s Teachers College, according to her LinkedIn. Passionate about children’s media and education, her LinkedIn says, she’s published research into the representation of refugee characters in children’s animated TV, interned at a consulting firm advising entertainment studios on children’s content and development, and taught courses on media and education to high school students.

Last year, Ozturk co-authored an op-ed in Tufts’ student newspaper, *The Tufts Daily*, backing the Tufts Community Union Senate’s call for the university to “acknowledge the Palestinian genocide, ... dislodge its investments and divest from companies with direct or indirect ties to Israel.”

Advertisement

After she was detained, Ozturk’s attorney filed a petition asking that Ozturk remain held in Massachusetts, which was granted. Nevertheless, ICE transferred her to Central Louisiana ICE Processing Center, which is notorious for unsanitary conditions, harsh punitive measures, and “a culture of abuse,” according to CNN and the ACLU. Jeff Migliozi, communications director for advocacy group Freedom for Immigrants, told CNN that ICE detention centers are intentionally remotely located, making them “effectively black boxes.”

Judge Denise Casper gave the government until April 1 to respond to an updated complaint filed by Ozturk's attorneys. In the meantime, the government cannot deport her without a court order while her case is being heard.

"No charges have been filed against Rumeysa to date that we are aware of," Ozturk's lawyer, Mahsa Khanbabai, told the AP. The Turkish Embassy in Washington, D.C., said in a statement on X that the embassy is monitoring Ozturk's situation and is in touch with the State Department and ICE.

Advertisement

Yunseo Chung

ICE cannot arrest 21-year-old Yunseo Chung, a judge ruled on March 25, granting a temporary restraining order against the government after her attorneys filed a lawsuit against the Trump Administration for trying to deport her in spite of her legal status.

"After the constant dread in the back of my mind over the past few weeks, this decision feels like a million pounds off of my chest. I feel like I could fly," Chung said in a statement provided to TIME. "I'm so, so grateful to my legal team and my community of professors, students, and staff at Columbia that have given me strength at every turn."



Photos shared by CUNY CLEAR of Columbia student Yunseo Chung, whom ICE has sought to arrest. *CUNY CLEAR*

Advertisement

At seven years old, Chung emigrated to the U.S. with her family from South Korea and became a lawful permanent resident, according to the lawsuit. She was valedictorian at her high school and enrolled in 2022 at Columbia University, where she was studying English and gender studies.

The 21-year-old reportedly attended—but was not a leader of—a sit-in at Barnard College protesting the expulsion of students who had participated in pro-Palestinian activism on March 5, according to the lawsuit. When an apparent white supremacist bomb threat was called (later determined to be a hoax), police officers instructed protesters to exit the building. Chung was caught in the rush to exit, the lawsuit says, and was arrested, charged with obstruction of governmental administration, given a “desk appearance ticket,” and released. She was suspended from Columbia as a result of the arrest on March 7. On March 9, ICE agents searched her parents’ home in an attempt to find her, the lawsuit alleges. The agents also obtained a warrant against “harboring noncitizens” to search her Columbia dormitory. A law enforcement official told her lawyer that her permanent resident status was being revoked.

Advertisement

A DHS spokesperson told the *Columbia Spectator*, Columbia's student newspaper, that Chung "engaged in concerning conduct, including when she was arrested by NYPD during a pro-Hamas protest at Barnard College. She is being sought for removal proceedings under the immigration laws." Chung had previously participated in, but not organized or led, protests and events at the Gaza Solidary Encampment on Columbia's campus last spring, according to the lawsuit. She also faced disciplinary proceedings from Columbia for vandalism after putting up posters with photos of members of Columbia's Board of Trustees with the words, "Wanted for Complicity in Genocide." After a review, the university found Chung had not violated any policies, the lawsuit says.

The complaint filed by Chung's attorneys alleges that the administration is demonstrating a "pattern and practice of targeting individuals associated with protests for Palestinian rights for immigration enforcement" and described the government's actions as an "unprecedented and unjustifiable assault on First Amendment and other rights..." As of March 31, the Trump Administration has not appealed the temporary restraining order.

Advertisement

"Yunseo no longer has to fear that ICE will spirit her away to a distant prison simply because she spoke up for Palestinian human rights," Ramzi Kassem, one of Chung's lawyers, said in a statement to TIME. "The court's temporary restraining order is both sensible and fair, to preserve the status quo as we litigate the serious constitutional issues at stake not just for Yunseo, but for our society as a whole."

Badar Khan Suri

Badar Khan Suri, an Indian citizen studying and teaching at Georgetown University on a valid J-1 visa, was detained by ICE on March 17.



Flyers in support of Badar Khan Suri at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., on Mar. 25, 2025. *Jose Luis Magana—AP*

Suri, who lives in Arlington, Va., was, like Ozturk, approached by masked men outside his home after an iftar gathering. Suri's lawyer, Nermeen Arastu, told CNN that the officers were "brandishing weapons." The agents identified themselves as members of DHS and told Suri that the government had revoked his visa, according to a lawsuit filed for his immediate release. The lawsuit alleges that the government is seeking to deport Suri under a rarely used provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act that gives the Secretary of State the authority to deport noncitizens for whom the Secretary has "reasonable ground to believe" their presence or activities in the U.S. "would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences."

Advertisement

"During his time on campus, I am not aware that Dr. Suri has engaged in any illegal activity, nor has he posed a threat to the security of our campus. He has been focused on completing his research," Joel Hellman, dean of Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, wrote in a statement on March 21.

Suri has no criminal record and has not been charged with any crime, according to the lawsuit. Rather, the lawsuit alleges Suri has been targeted because his wife, a U.S. citizen, is

of Palestinian heritage and because of her past “constitutionally protected free speech.” The couple has “long been doxxed and smeared,” the petition says, including being posted on an anonymously-run blacklisting website. Nader Hashemi, a professor of Middle East and Islamic politics at Georgetown, told Democracy Now! That Suri is “not a political activist. He was just a very serious young academic focusing on his teaching and his research.”

Advertisement

Department of Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin confirmed Suri’s detention after it was first reported by Politico. In a post on X, McLaughlin called Suri a “foreign exchange student at Georgetown University actively spreading Hamas propaganda and promoting antisemitism on social media.” McLaughlin added that Suri has “close connections to a known or suspected terrorist, who is a senior advisor to Hamas.” Suri’s wife, Mapheze Saleh, was formerly employed at Qatari-based news outlet Al Jazeera, and her father served as a political adviser to the “Prime Minister of Gaza” (the late Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, according to the New York Times) until 2010, according to a court declaration filed on March 20.

A federal judge ruled on March 20 that the Trump Administration could not deport Suri while his case challenging his detention is being reviewed in court. Suri was held at the Alexandria Staging Facility in Louisiana before being transferred to the Prairieland Detention Facility in Texas, which has also faced complaints about its conditions. Suri’s arrest and detention prompted protests on March 26 by Georgetown University students and academics calling for his release.

Advertisement

Momodou Taal

Momodou Taal, a 31-year-old Cornell graduate student and dual U.K. and Gambian citizen, chose to leave the U.S. on March 31 after his student visa was revoked on March 14 and he faced the threat of detainment and deportation.

Taal participated in pro-Palestinian protests last year, causing him to be suspended twice and at risk of losing his student visa. He also faced backlash after posting on X: “colonised peoples have the right to resist by any means necessary” after the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel. In a Nov. 2023 interview with CNN, Taal said, “I can say clearly categorically I abhor the killing of all civilians no matter where they are and who does it. I love life. I don’t love death. That’s what I am as a human being. Why is it the association because I’m a Muslim and I’m a Black person, I have to condemn a proscribed terrorist organization before having an opinion on genocide?” Taal was banned from campus for the remainder of the spring 2025 semester after protesting at a career fair attended by defense contractors.

Advertisement



thegambian
Original audio

[View profile](#)



Taal sought to preemptively block immigration enforcement against him by filing a lawsuit against the Trump Administration on March 15. The complaint, representing Taal and two other student activists, said the plaintiffs “fear government retaliation” for engaging in “constitutionally protected expression critical of U.S. foreign policy and supportive of Palestinian human rights.”

Taal, a PhD student in Africana studies, was asked to surrender to ICE agents six days later. His attorneys, including Eric Lee, filed an emergency request blocking his detainment or deportation while the court reviews the constitutional challenge.

Advertisement

But after a judge denied a first motion to immediately block his deportation, Taal said in a March 31 post on X that he will voluntarily leave the U.S. “Given what we have seen across the United States, I have lost faith that a favourable ruling from the courts would guarantee my personal safety and ability to express my beliefs. I have lost faith I could walk the streets without being abducted,” Taal wrote. “This is of course not the outcome I had wanted going into this, but we are facing a government that has no respect for the judiciary or for the rule of law.”

Around 200 students and faculty protested on Cornell’s Ithaca campus earlier in March in support of Taal. “I wish I could be with you all in person, but the situation has got to the point where it is no longer safe,” Lee read from a statement by Taal at the start of the protest. “Momodou Taal is a test case to determine whether the government can come to your house, grab you and put you in jail for criticizing the United States government and its policies,” Lee said after a hearing on March 26.

Advertisement

Leqaa Kordia

Leqaa Kordia was arrested in Newark, New Jersey, on March 14, according to a DHS statement, which said that the West Bank Palestinian had overstayed her student visa, which was terminated in January 2022 for “lack of attendance.” Kordia was among those arrested in

April 2024 for her involvement in campus protests. As of March 31, she is being held at the Prairieland Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas, according to ICE records.

Mahmoud Khalil

Mahmoud Khalil was arrested at his home by ICE agents on March 8, 2025, and remains in custody as of March 31 at a Louisiana detention facility.



Protestors hold signs calling for the release of Columbia University student, Mahmoud Khalil, who was arrested for his involvement with campus protests against Israel, during a rally outside the White House on Mar. 18, 2025. *Andrew Harnik—Getty Images*

Advertisement

He was born in Syria to Palestinian refugees. Initially meant to study aviation engineering in Syria, he fled the country's civil war to Beirut, Lebanon, and graduated from the Lebanese American University with a degree in computer science in 2018. He worked with several nonprofits in the Middle East, including Jusoor, a Syrian-American educational nonprofit, and the Syria Chevening Programme at the British Embassy in Beirut, which offers international scholarships to study in the U.K.—a role that former British diplomat Andrew Waller, and Khalil's colleague at the time, said required an extensive background check.

Khalil moved to the U.S. in 2022 to attend Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs, completing his master's degree studies in December 2024. He married an American woman—making him eligible for a green card—who is eight months pregnant with their first child.

The 30-year-old was involved in several of the protests against the war in Gaza at Columbia University last spring, and he led negotiations between student protesters and university officials. Detractors say Khalil was a prominent leader of Columbia University Apartheid Divest, a student group calling for Columbia to divest from its financial ties to Israel and which has been accused of antisemitism though the group rejects the label.

Advertisement

Last year, Khalil was suspended for one day from Columbia after police cracked down on students occupying a campus building. He told the BBC at the time that he was acting only as a protest negotiator and had not participated in the student encampment because he had been on a student visa. The university rescinded the suspension after finding they had no evidence against him. "It shows how random the suspension was," he said at the time. "They did that randomly, and without due process."

The White House has alleged without evidence that Khalil distributed pro-Hamas materials at a protest and that he failed to disclose his work with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) on his green card application. The UNRWA, a U.N. agency that provides aid and relief to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, was banned by Israel last year for allegedly "spreading antisemitism" and having members who took part in the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack. Khalil worked as an unpaid intern with UNRWA in 2023 but was never on staff, the agency told CNN.

Advertisement

A judge temporarily blocked the attempted deportation of Khalil on March 10, pending review of his case. Lawyers for Khalil also filed a lawsuit challenging his detention by ICE, and a New York judge ruled his case should be transferred to New Jersey instead of Louisiana, which the Trump Administration pushed for, as well as reaffirmed the previous ruling blocking his deportation.

Khalil and seven other students [filed a lawsuit](#) against Columbia and the House Education and Workforce Committee on March 13 in an effort to prevent the disciplinary records of students—including around the student occupation of Hamilton Hall—from being turned over to the Republican-led committee.

Read More: [What To Know About Mahmoud Khalil, and Why His Green Card Was Revoked](#)

Ranjani Srinivasan

Ranjani Srinivasan, a 37-year-old architect, came to the U.S. from Chennai, India, as a Fulbright recipient in 2016, became a PhD candidate at Columbia in 2020, and began [teaching](#) as an adjunct professor at New York University last fall. She was in the 5th year of her doctoral degree at Columbia University's Department of Urban Planning when ICE agents knocked at her door on March 7.

Advertisement

Srinivasan learned that her student visa had been revoked by the Department of State via an email on March 5. She sought help from Columbia's international students office and was told she was in legal status, according to a letter [published](#) on political scientist Norman Finkelstein's website. But when three ICE agents came to her Columbia University apartment without a warrant two days later, she became worried, according to the [*New York Times*](#). Her roommate, an American citizen, refused to let the agents in.

Finding little recourse through the university's hotlines, Srinivasan left for a safer location. On March 9, ICE terminated her SEVIS status and the university de-enrolled her, according to the letter. Facing the risk of detention and deportation, Srinivasan left the U.S. for Canada.

Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem [posted on X](#) airport surveillance footage showing Srinivasan at LaGuardia Airport in New York. "When you advocate for violence and terrorism that privilege should be revoked and you should not be in this country," Noem wrote in the post, adding that Srinivasan chose to "self deport." Srinivasan's lawyers denied the allegations against her, according to the *Times*.

Advertisement

In her letter posted to Finkelstein’s website, Srinivasan maintained that she only attended “a handful of low-level protests,” and, according to the *Times*, she signed several open letters related to the war in Gaza. She was arrested by police last year on the day that students occupied Hamilton Hall, but said she had only been walking through the crowd to return to her apartment. She received two summonses—for obstructing vehicular or pedestrian traffic and for refusing to disperse—but her case was dismissed, her lawyers told the *Times*.

“They’re making me out to be some sort of protest leader, which I’m not,” Srinivasan told Indian news site The News Minute. “I am just a PhD student who has too much work. Even if I wanted to go to a protest, I mostly don’t have time because I’m busy grading papers.”

Must-Reads from TIME

‘Safe and sound’: How a U.S. Airman Shot Down in Iran Was Rescued From a Mountain Crevice >

What to Know About the 25th Amendment as Lawmakers Call for Trump’s Removal >

Iranian President Pens Open Letter to American People >

READ MORE 

TIME

Sections

Home

Climate

[Politics](#)

[Ideas](#)

[Health](#)

[Entertainment](#)

[AI](#)

[Sports](#)

[World](#)

[Technology](#)

[Business](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Science](#)

More

[The TIME Vault](#)

[TIME Studios](#)

[TIME Africa](#)

[Video](#)

[TIME France](#)

[Red Border](#)

[TIME For Kids](#)

[Supplied Partner Content](#)

[TIME Futures](#)

About Us

[Our Mission](#)

[Masthead](#)

[Contact the Editors](#)

[Careers](#)

[Press Room](#)

[Site Map](#)

[Media Kit](#)

[Modern Slavery Statement](#)

[Reprints & Permissions](#)

Your Subscriptions

Subscribe

Buy an Issue

Access My Digital Magazine

Shop the Cover Store

Manage My Subscription

Give a Gift

Global Help Center



© 2026 TIME USA, LLC. All Rights Reserved. Use of this site constitutes acceptance of our [Terms of Service](#), [Privacy Policy](#), [\(Your Privacy Rights\)](#) and [Do Not Sell or Share My Personal Information](#).

TIME may receive compensation for some links to products and services on this website. Offers may be subject to change without notice.