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EXPLAINER

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US revokes nearly 1,700 student visas: Who are the targets?

Hundreds of students have had their visas cancelled and find themselves in limbo. Some have been arrested.

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By Al Jazeera Staff

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The Trump administration alleges that these students spread anti-Semitism and pro-Hamas sentiment on campus – a claim students, lawyers and activists have all rebutted. Jewish activists and groups have been at the forefront of many of the most prominent protests in the US against the Gaza war.

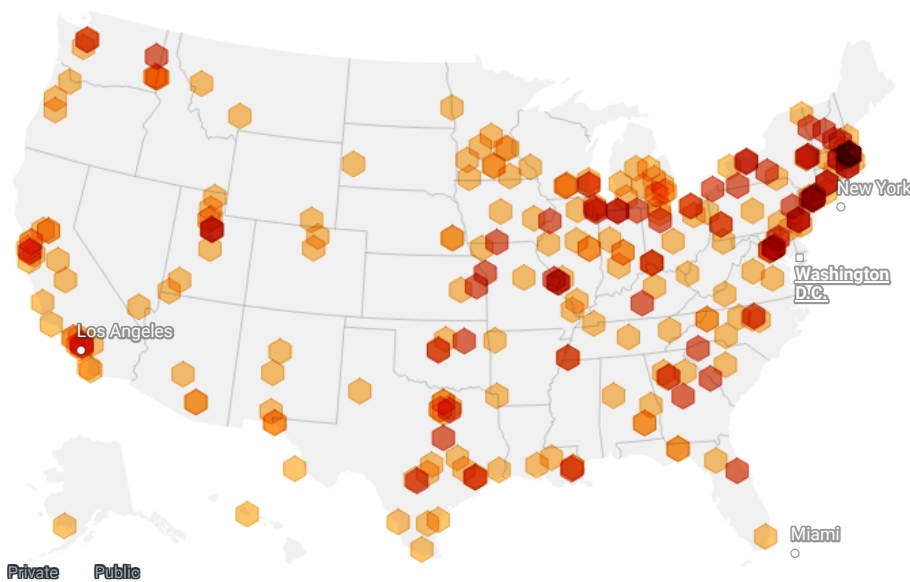
Others have had their visas cancelled after minor legal infractions – a speeding ticket or other traffic violations, for instance.

Here’s what we know about the scale of the visa revocations, the number of universities involved and some of the students who have been targeted:

Trump’s crackdown on international student visas

As of April 21, more than 260 US colleges and universities have identified at least 1,680 international students and recent graduates whose visas have been revoked by the Trump administration, according to a tally by Inside Higher Ed.

Click on the hexagons below for more information



How many students have had their visas revoked?

In late March, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the administration had revoked an estimated 300 student visas.

But the real number is higher – much higher.

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Even more conservative tabulations point to a number comfortably more than 1,000. The National Association of Foreign Student Advisers estimates that as of Thursday, there are reports of about 1,400 students who now face deportation.

According to Inside Higher Ed, the US-based higher education publication, more than 1,680 students had lost their visas as of Monday.

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How many universities have been affected?

According to Inside Higher Ed’s count, people at more than 250 universities and colleges across the US have had their student visas revoked.

Colleges affected include private universities such as Harvard and Stanford, large public colleges and institutions such as The Ohio State University and the University of Maryland as well as some small liberal arts colleges.

Why are the visas being revoked and what are the options?

The Trump administration says it is trying to stop activists from taking over campuses.

“We are not going to be importing activists into the United States. They’re here to study. They’re here to go to class. They’re not here to lead activist movements that are disruptive and undermine the – our universities,” Rubio said on March 28.

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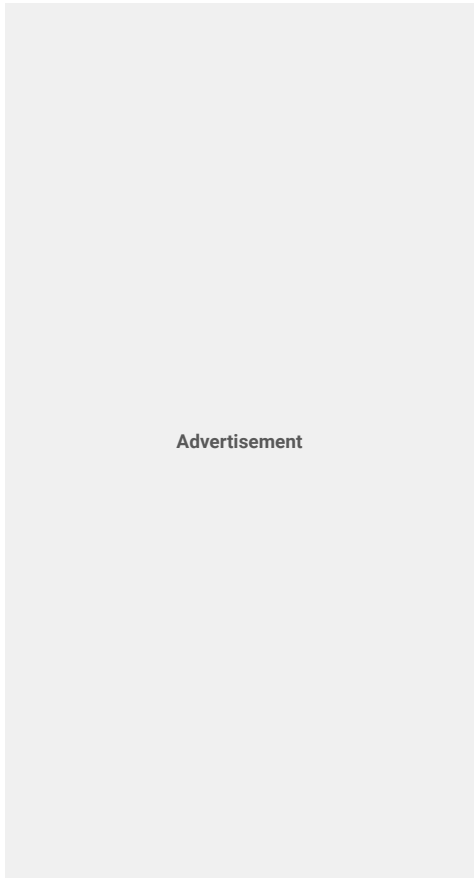
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“This widespread action has led to legal challenges and raised concerns about due process and the impact on US higher education institutions,” said Syed, who emphasised that international students ought to consult with immigration lawyers promptly to explore legal remedies and protect their rights.

“Students can file lawsuits in federal courts, asserting violations of due process and seeking to restore their legal status. For instance, students at Michigan universities have initiated legal actions against the Department of Homeland Security, alleging that their F-1 statuses were terminated without sufficient notice or explanation,” he said.

In urgent situations, he added, students may request temporary restraining orders to prevent deportation and reinstate their status while legal proceedings are ongoing. Federal judges in states like Montana have granted such orders to protect students from immediate removal, he said.



“Many universities are actively assisting affected students by providing legal resources, liaising with federal authorities and offering academic accommodations,” Syed said. “For example, George Mason University has engaged with federal officials to understand the rationale behind visa terminations and is exploring legal options to support its international students.”

How are visa cancellations affecting campuses?

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Another faculty member, a naturalised citizen at a state college who wished to remain anonymous due to any issues that may arise from him speaking freely, said international students are afraid.

Many of them – even those who have not staked out political positions publicly – are deleting their social media profiles and are terrified that some small mistake, anything they posted or said, might get them abducted and deported, ruining their education, he said.

“I remember being a green card holder and engaging in politics. We understood that as long as we remained within the bounds of the law, we had the right to express our opinions and engage in politics,” he recalled.

“I actively took part in [protests against] both the Afghanistan and Iraq wars and spoke openly against ‘war on terror’ policies like drone strikes,” he said. “What the Trump administration wants to do is communicate to immigrants and international students that their rights here are in fact privileges and contingent on them staying in line, and more broadly they want to shut down pathways to immigration by targeting green card holders.

“At the same time, they see universities and colleges as bastions of liberal and left-wing politics, and they want to leverage the politics around Palestine to discipline universities and force them to crack down on liberal and left content in classrooms.”

Which students and graduates have been affected?

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Who are the students that are being targeted by the Trump administration?

On January 29, Trump signed an executive order titled "Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism".

Nearly 300 students and recent graduates have seen their visas revoked by immigration officials in the weeks surrounding the arrest of Columbia alumnus Mahmoud Khalil.

Students who protested for Palestine are having their legal visas and residence status revoked and are being arrested and detained.

Search in table

	Name	Nationality	Legal status in the US	Institution	Date of arrest	Case status
1	 Mahmoud Khalil, 30	Algerian Palestinian	Green card holder	Masters graduate, Columbia University graduate	March 8, 2025	Appeal with federal court
2	 Rumeysa Ozturk, 30	Turkish	Student visa	Fulbright, PhD scholar Tufts University	March 25, 2025	In ICE detention
3	 Badar Khan Suri, 42	Indian	Student visa	Postdoctoral fellow, Georgetown University	March 17, 2025	In ICE detention
4	 Yunseo Chung, 21	Korean American	Green card holder	Columbia University	March 5, 2025	In ICE detention
5	 Momodou Taal, 31	Gambian British	Student visa	PhD, Cornell University	Not arrested	Left the United States
6	 Alireza Doroudi, 32	Iranian	Student visa	University of Alabama	March 25, 2025	In ICE detention
7	 Ranjani Srinivasan, 37	Indian	Student visa	PhD, Columbia University	Not arrested	Self-deported, left the US
8	 Leqaa Kordia, 21	Palestinian	Student visa	Columbia University	March 13, 2025	In ICE detention
9	 Xiaotian Liu	Chinese	Student visa	Dartmouth	Not arrested	Halted deportation through the court
10	 Mohsen Mahdawi, 30	Palestinian	Green card holder	New York City college	April 14, 2025	In ICE detention
11	 Zhuoer Chen	Chinese	Student visa	UC Berkeley	Visa revoked on April 8	Filed for injunction

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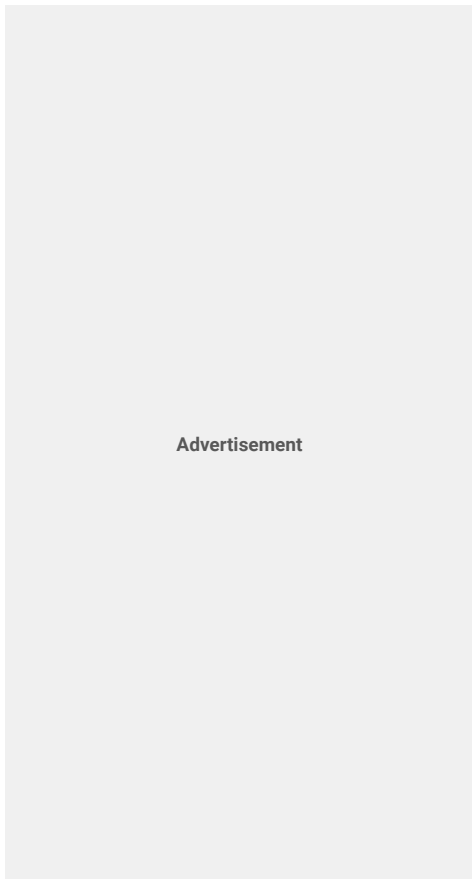
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THE NEW YORK TIMES | 4/8/2025 | 11:40:00PM

Mahmoud Khalil, 30

- **Date of arrest:** March 8
- **Nationality:** Palestinian Algerian
- **Institution:** Columbia University graduate
- **Legal status in the US:** green card holder
- **How was he arrested?** Last month, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested [Khalil](#), a recent Columbia University graduate who was the lead negotiator for Columbia University Apartheid Divest, a coalition of student groups, during the campus protests last year. He was taken from his university-owned New York City apartment while his US citizen wife, Noor Abdalla, who is pregnant, recorded the arrest on her phone. This marked the first publicly known student deportation effort of its kind under the Trump administration.



A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Tricia McLaughlin, alleged Khalil “led activities aligned to Hamas, a designated

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However, Rubio posted a link to a news article about Khalil's arrest, captioning it: "We will be revoking the visas and/or green cards of Hamas supporters in America so they can be deported." Khalil's case has drawn widespread scrutiny as rights advocates accuse the Trump administration of cracking down on free speech and pro-Palestine activism under the guise of fighting anti-Semitism.

The administration is trying to deport Khalil under a rarely used provision of an immigration law that gives the secretary of state the power to remove any noncitizen whose presence in the US is deemed to have "adverse foreign policy consequences".

Khalil is being held at LaSalle Detention Center in Jena, Louisiana.

Rumeysa Ozturk, 30

- **Date of arrest:** March 26
- **Nationality:** Turkish
- **Institution:** Tufts University
- **Legal status in the US:** student visa, which has been revoked
- **How was she arrested?** Security camera footage shows six individuals in plainclothes [taking Ozturk into custody](#) in late March near her apartment in Somerville, Massachusetts. Some of these officers were partially covering their faces. Ozturk had headed out alone to meet her friends for iftar, the evening meal to break her Ramadan fast.
- **Charges:** She is not known to have been charged with any crime.

On March 26, 2024, Ozturk co-wrote an opinion piece for her university's student news website, the Tufts Daily, with four other students. In this piece, the authors criticised the institution's president, Sunil Kumar, who sent an email dismissing resolutions passed by the Tufts Community Union Senate, which called for the university to divest from companies linked to Israel and "acknowledge the Palestinian genocide".

Ozturk's lawyer, Mahsa Khanbabai, filed a petition in a federal court in Boston, arguing that Ozturk had been unlawfully detained. As a result, US District Judge Indira Talwani ordered ICE not to move Ozturk out of Massachusetts without 48 hours notice.

Despite this, Ozturk was moved to Louisiana within a day, according to her lawyer.

McLaughlin wrote in an X post on March 26: "DHS + ICE investigations found Ozturk engaged in activities in support of Hamas, a foreign terrorist organization that relishes the killing of Americans." McLaughlin did not specify what these activities were.

On Saturday, a federal judge ordered the government to transfer Ozturk to Vermont for the court to assess legal challenges to her detention.

Badar Khan Suri, 42

- **Date of arrest:** March 17

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McLaughlin attributed [Suri's arrest](#) to “spreading Hamas propaganda and promoting anti-Semitism”. She wrote on X: “Suri has close connections to a known or suspected terrorist, who is a senior advisor to Hamas.”

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Suri's wife, Mapheze Saleh, is a US citizen, she confirmed to Al Jazeera. In a post on X on February 13, the Israeli embassy in the US said Saleh was the daughter of a senior Hamas adviser. Ahmed Yousef, a former adviser to assassinated Hamas political leader Ismail Haniyeh, confirmed to The New York Times that he is Suri's father-in-law.

On March 20, Judge Patricia Tolliver Giles of the federal District Court in Alexandria, Virginia, halted Suri's deportation.

According to the ICE website, Suri is currently being held in the Prairieland Detention Center in Alvarado, Texas.

Yunseo Chung, 21

- **Date of arrest:** March 5
- **Nationality:** South Korean

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Momodou Taal, 31

- **Nationality:** dual citizen of the United Kingdom and The Gambia
- **Institution:** was a doctoral candidate in Africana studies at Cornell University
- **Legal status in the US:** student visa, which has been revoked
- **Charges:** He is not known to have been charged with any crime.

He participated in pro-Palestine protests last year, during which he called on Cornell to divest from companies that sell weapons to Israel. Taal was suspended from Cornell twice last year for his participation in protests, including an encampment. He has not been arrested but believes the US government had tried to arrest him.

Taal told Al Jazeera that he filed a lawsuit on March 8 with two other plaintiffs – a doctoral candidate and a Cornell professor who are both US citizens – after Khalil was arrested against two Trump executive orders, including one focused on university campuses.

On the morning of March 19, a day after a federal judge scheduled a hearing for Taal's lawsuit, Taal posted a written statement on X that "unidentified law enforcement" had come to his home in Ithaca, New York. He added that later in the day, Cornell students saw additional law enforcement cars positioned at different spots near his residence, including on campus.

Taal left the US once his visa was revoked on March 14.

Alireza Doroudi, 32

- **Date of arrest:** March 25
- **Nationality:** Iranian
- **Institution:** University of Alabama
- **Legal status in the US:** student visa, which has been revoked
- **How was he arrested?** He was taken into custody from his home
- **Charges:** He is not known to have been charged with any crime.

DHS stated his student visa was revoked and Doroudi was then arrested because he "posed significant national security concerns".

Ranjani Srinivasan, 37

- **Nationality:** Indian

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By March 11, Srinivasan flew out of New York to Canada on a visitor visa to stay with family and friends. Her lawyers informed ICE that Srinivasan had departed from the US.

Leqaa Kordia, 21

- **Date of arrest:** March 13
- **Nationality:** Palestinian
- **Institution:** unknown
- **Legal status in the US:** overstayed a student visa
- **Charges:** The DHS said Kordia had overstayed her student visa, which had been terminated in 2022 “for lack of attendance”. In April 2024, she was arrested for her involvement in protests for Gaza at Columbia University.

Xiaotian Liu, 26

- **Nationality:** Chinese
- **Institution:** Dartmouth College
- **Legal status in the US:** student visa, which was revoked
- **Charges:** No known charges have been filed against Liu.

On April 3, Liu’s college ran a routine check on his legal status and discovered that his student visa had been revoked without notice.

The next day, the university informed him he could not continue with his computer science doctorate.

Liu said he has not been charged with any crime and did not take part in any protests.

He sued the US government along with the American Civil Liberties Union of New Hampshire, alleging his visa had been revoked “without any notice and sufficient explanation”.

On April 9, a federal judge in New Hampshire halted the decision temporarily, saying she would block the Trump administration’s apparent revocation of Liu’s status.

Mohsen Mahdawi, 30

- **Date of arrest:** April 14
- **Nationality:** Palestinian

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Shortly after Mahdawi's detention, District Judge William Sessions ordered that he must not be taken from the state of Vermont or the US. Mahdawi is the co-founder of a Palestinian student group at Columbia University alongside Khalil.

It is unclear where he is being held.

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