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International Students In Jeopardy As Visas Are Revoked

India Currents
Apr 21, 2025

San Jose, CA (India Currents)

In the latest policy shift on immigration, the current administration has threatened to revoke the visas of all 9970+ international students and faculty associated with Harvard University, adding to the stand-off that froze more than \$2.3 billion of the university's federal funding after Harvard refused to accept the administration's demands. Meanwhile, the IRS has threatened to change Harvard's tax-exempt status.

As of Apr 17, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had already revoked the visas of 12 Harvard students and canceled \$2.7 million worth of contracts. In a new ultimatum, DHS has demanded details of all international students' disciplinary records and protest participation, as reported in the Harvard Crimson.

Across the United States, more than 1200 students have lost their immigration status or had their visas revoked for reasons ranging from protests about Palestine to minor driving infractions. In some cases, no valid reasons have been provided for the revocation, placing international students in limbo about their future.

In a financial blow, students whose visas have been terminated have to stop employment immediately as their OPTs and CPTs are no longer valid, nor can work as Research or Teaching Assistants in school, putting them at risk for tuition

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payments and work-study grants. New regulations require them to carry their passports and I-20s at all times, nor can they travel outside the country. Currently, schools have advised students to continue their education and keep attending classes while they work to resolve the situation. Visa revocations do not immediately require a student to self-deport, unless the DHS has filed a Notice to Appear (NTA) with the immigration court to start the removal process. (Source: American Immigration Lawyers Association.)

Rajiv S. Khanna, a prominent Indian-American immigration lawyer, has issued a memorandum advising students facing a SEVIS termination. In it, he outlines two major options: to depart and attempt re-entry, a high-risk move, or to pursue litigation and attempt re-instatement, a costlier option with no guarantees either.

A Dartmouth PhD student whose F-1 status was revoked by DHS, has found limited success through this move by getting his visa status temporarily restored by a New Hampshire federal court.

The move on international students is inducing fear in brown and black communities while actively dismantling the systems that were meant to support them by squashing academic freedoms, stifling university incomes, and aiding in the goal of deporting one million immigrants by the end of 2025.

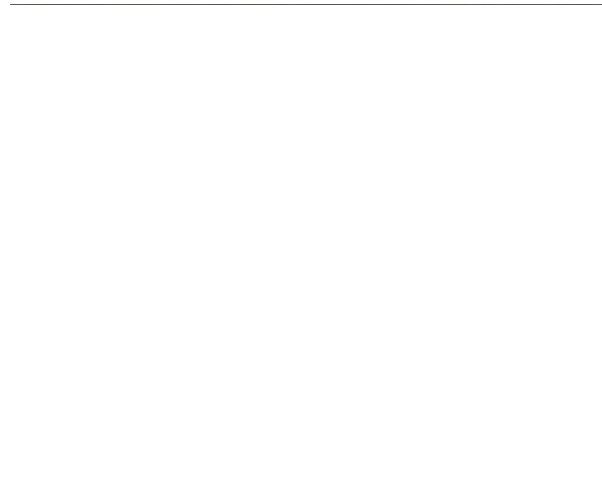
The crackdown on universities is creating environments of fear and uncertainty on campuses across the country.

In a letter to the Harvard community, Harvard's president Alan M. Garber wrote, "We proceed now, as always, with the conviction that the fearless and unfettered pursuit of truth liberates humanity -- and with faith in the enduring promise that America's colleges and universities hold for our country and our world."

Some universities have capitulated to the administration's demands and preemptively taken actions against international students by cancelling internships and withholding financial support.

Some Indian students who asked that their names be withheld shared their experiences "My university's office for international students refused to give me permission to start a 6-month internship set to begin next month, citing potential problems with the new administration," said a post-graduate student at a top research university. "They even ignored my graduate research advisor, who stood up for me and shut the door in his face."

Echoing the sentiments of other Indian students who fear for their academic future and careers, the student added, "My hope is to work for a few years and then go back to India. The administration is making us feel even more unwelcome, and this life of instability and constant dread is highly stressful."



A PhD graduate student who has lived in the US for more than five years says that she has erased most of her social media presence and now only posts politically irrelevant content. "I just want to get my course over with, it's very hard to function on a day-to-day basis, wondering if you're going to get an email telling you that your visa has been cancelled. Particularly when you're doing a PhD -- it's years of investment that could all go down the drain with just one email."

Currently, 1.1 million international students, mostly from India and China, are enrolled at US universities. Typically, they pay tuition fees much higher than those paid by American citizens. Universities have employed this tactic for decades to

subsidize in-state tuition fees. Only in rare circumstances do international students qualify for scholarships or financial aid.

According to the NAFSA, international students at U.S. colleges and universities contributed \$43.8 billion and supported 378,175 jobs to the U.S. economy during the 2023-2024 academic year alone. Currently, the American Immigration Lawyers Association is challenging the visa revocations in court.

A student added, "Funnily enough, freedom of speech was the one thing I always appreciated about the US. Something we can't, maybe, do in most of our home countries- i.e, have an opinion and have a right to the opinion without getting penalized for it. For all its faults, it was a country that allowed for private liberties like criticism, even against their own presidents."

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