# US government outlines criteria for terminating international students' legal status



The United States government has recently disclosed details regarding its crackdown on international students, revealing how it targeted thousands and the criteria used to terminate their legal status. This information has come to light through lawsuits filed by students who experienced abrupt cancellations of their status with minimal explanation.

In the past month, numerous foreign students across the U.S. were alarmed to discover that their records had been removed from a student database managed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The situation caused panic among some students, leading to fears of detention or deportation, with others abandoning their studies and returning to their home countries.

Federal officials, responding to escalating legal challenges, announced on a recent Friday that they would restore the affected students' legal status while devising a new framework to guide future terminations. A document outlining updated policies was submitted in court filings on the following Monday. This new guidance specifies various grounds for cancelling student status, notably including the revocation of the visas that students used to enter the United States.

Brad Banias, an immigration lawyer representing one affected student, criticised the guidelines as significantly expanding ICE’s authority beyond previous policies. He explained that under the new rules, visa revocation now serves as grounds for losing legal status, which had not been the case before. Banias told Inkl, “This just gave them carte blanche to have the State Department revoke a visa and then deport those students even if they’ve done nothing wrong.”

Many students whose visas were revoked or who lost their status reported only minor infractions on their records, such as driving violations. Some were unaware of the reasons why they were targeted.

Government lawyers offered further details at a Tuesday hearing concerning one student, Akshar Patel. Patel, an international student studying information systems in Texas, had his status terminated and subsequently reinstated earlier this month. He is seeking a preliminary court order to prevent deportation.

At the hearing and in court documents, officials from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) revealed that they cross-checked student visa holders’ names against the National Crime Information Center (NCIC), an FBI database containing information on suspects, missing persons, and individuals arrested even if charges were eventually dropped or never filed.

U.S. District Judge Ana Reyes, appointed by President Joe Biden, stated that the database check flagged about 6,400 students. Patel, one of the flagged students, had been stopped and charged with reckless driving in 2018—a charge that was later dropped. The information remained in NCIC.

Patel’s name appeared on a spreadsheet including 734 students identified through this NCIC query. This list was forwarded to a Homeland Security official who, within 24 hours, instructed: “Please terminate all in SEVIS.” SEVIS is a separate database that tracks foreigners with legal student status in the U.S.

Judge Reyes noted the rapid response suggested no individual review of the flagged cases to understand why students appeared in NCIC had taken place. She said, “All of this could have been avoided if someone had taken a beat,” and criticised the government for showing “an utter lack of concern for individuals who have come into this country.”

The sudden change in students’ legal status sowed confusion among colleges. Normally, updates to students’ statuses occur after institutions notify authorities that a student has ceased studies. This disruption has led colleges in some cases to advise affected students to stop working or attending classes and warned of possible deportation.

Nevertheless, government attorneys argued the database update did not equate to an immediate loss of legal status, even though some students were labelled as having “failure to maintain status.” Instead, lawyers described this as an “investigative red flag.” Andre Watson, a Department of Homeland Security representative, stated, “Mr. Patel is lawfully present in the U.S. He is not subject to immediate detention or removal.”

Judge Reyes declined to issue a preliminary injunction during the hearing but encouraged the parties to reach a settlement ensuring Patel’s continued stay in the country.

The Inkl report underscores a developing situation in which the U.S. government is systematically reviewing international students via law enforcement databases and applying stricter criteria for visa and status termination, prompting ongoing legal disputes and operational challenges for educational institutions and affected students alike.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://apnews.com/article/716ce8e67e2c3093eba4092e57ba1612> - This article discusses the U.S. government's revision of its policy on terminating the legal status of international students, leading to confusion and court challenges. It highlights how thousands of students had their records removed from the SEVIS database managed by ICE, often with little explanation, and the use of the National Crime Information Center (NCIC) database to flag visa holders for deportation over minor infractions.
* <https://time.com/7280101/how-betrayed-international-students/> - This piece highlights the increasing challenges and targeting faced by international students in the U.S., particularly under the Trump administration. It centers on cases like that of Momodou Taal, a Cornell University student who filed a lawsuit against executive orders that allegedly infringed on free speech and due process rights, leading to his visa revocation and deportation proceedings.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-restore-foreign-students-legal-status-now-2025-04-25/> - This article reports on the Trump administration's decision to temporarily restore the legal status of hundreds of foreign students in the U.S. while formulating a new policy governing student visa terminations. It details how over 4,700 students had their records removed from the SEVIS database, risking deportation, and the subsequent legal challenges and court orders preventing deportation.
* <https://time.com/7280506/trump-student-visas-f1/> - This article discusses the Trump administration's reversal of its decision to cancel the immigration records of thousands of international students, following intense legal, institutional, and public backlash. It details how ICE had abruptly terminated the SEVIS records of around 4,700 students, often due to minor or dismissed legal infractions, rendering them technically undocumented and at risk of deportation.
* <https://apnews.com/article/9e8a7cb90f4193ec52bf06edc5094cd9> - This article reports on the U.S. government's reversal of the recent termination of legal status for over 1,200 international students, following numerous lawsuits against the Trump administration’s crackdown. It details how ICE had deactivated student records in the SEVIS database, leaving many at risk of deportation without clear justification, and the subsequent legal challenges and court orders restoring student statuses.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/first-100-days-trump-tells-migrants-leave-united-states-2025-04-25/> - This article discusses President Donald Trump's implementation of sweeping immigration policies, including revoking legal statuses and visas across various groups of migrants. It details how the administration halted the renewal of parole work permits for Ukrainians and targeted international students involved in protests or with minor infractions, leading to abrupt visa terminations and deportation proceedings.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMisgFBVV95cUxNRHEwcWZWcEJGa2h0ckl6WV9aSm05WjJDek1nRDBPTFBrZG1uRmpaaHN1MHpaSHhXQ0Y5MnUtSjVvLTBKNTVWeHZ3Wm9CUnk0SmtudjRTY1pyT21WSUN3ZnZFVWhuZ1dVaEZYMXFnMlhNUldGQTVscmg2RGR4aXAzSHNweUxQbFVKbDc2VldTdnk0dHM0ZC1qcDk2ZE1aaDV1TkxSYW1LMWR2TkJOQmVrODNB?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data