

A dragnet of repression

Trump administration revokes student visas at Cal State Long Beach as part of fascist crackdown on dissent

Marc Wells
13 April 2025

In a chilling escalation of state repression and anti-democratic assault, the Trump administration has launched a sweeping crackdown on international students across the United States, targeting those perceived as opposing its brutal policies, especially those who have dared to speak out against the genocidal siege of Gaza.

At California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), six international students have recently had their visas revoked without clear cause or warning. Four of these students are currently enrolled at the university, while two were participating in the Optional Practical Training (OPT) program for recent graduates. The university administration's silence and lack of transparency about the revocations only underscore the political nature of this witch-hunt.

These attacks are not isolated incidents. Across the California State University (CSU) system, 48 students have been similarly targeted. Statewide, nearly 150 international students have been abruptly stripped of their visas, with no explanation provided other than the opaque declarations of the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department. Behind this bureaucratic fog lies a clear and sinister agenda: the political intimidation and punishment of those who stand in opposition to the policies of Trump's fascist regime.

The primary targets are students and faculty who have voiced support for the Palestinian people, who have marched against the war machine, and who have dared to dissent. From CSULB to the University of California system, from Stanford to UCLA, to Montana

State University, to University of Michigan, and most notoriously at Columbia University—the crackdown has reached across the nation.

Mahmoud Khalil, a legal permanent resident and graduate student at Columbia, has become a high-profile symbol of this authoritarian campaign. In a disturbing development, an administrative immigration judge in Louisiana ruled on Friday that the federal government can proceed with deportation proceedings against Khalil, whose only “crime” is his vocal opposition to the US-backed slaughter in Gaza. This ruling confirms that even green-card holders can be stripped of their rights for exercising free speech.

At Montana State University, three more student visas were canceled in a DHS database sweep. University officials admitted the federal government has not communicated about the decisions. The story is consistent across institutions: due process is being ignored, explanations are withheld, and college administrations comply.

California Attorney General Rob Bonta, as part of a coalition of 19 attorneys general, has filed an amicus brief denouncing the executive orders enabling these “ideologically-motivated” revocations. In his public statement, Bonta decried the arbitrary targeting of students, warning that such actions create a “culture of fear” and disrupt the nation's academic institutions.

Bonta's involvement, far from signaling a real avenue of defense for students or workers, highlights the deepening contradictions within the capitalist system itself. It reflects just how far the crisis has penetrated the system, to the extent that a representative

of the repressive state apparatus feels compelled to issue a mild rebuke, not out of principle but out of fear of broader unrest. The political function of such interventions is to pacify resistance and to foster illusions that reform is possible within a system that is irredeemably hostile to democratic rights.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio smugly dismissed the fundamental rights of these students. “No one has a right to a visa,” he declared, implying that the constitutional freedoms of international students can be discarded at will by an authoritarian administration.

The revocations are part of a wider dragnet against political expression, particularly speech and thought that challenge US imperialism and domestic repression. The Trump administration is also targeting no fewer than 900 California faculty members in a sprawling investigation that remains shrouded in secrecy. This further confirms that intellectual freedom is under systematic assault.

This campaign is an outright political purge. It is a state-led assault on democratic and constitutional rights, aimed at terrorizing those who challenge the capitalist oligarchy and its policies of global war. These revocations represent collective punishment for engaging in activism, speech and organizing, actions that the ruling class views as threats to its power.

The root cause of this crackdown is not the racist and xenophobic obsession of a single president, but rather the intensification of the crisis of American and world capitalism, which is in terminal decline. Vast sums are funneled into war, surveillance, and militarized policing, while universities are defunded, workers discarded, and students criminalized. International students are being scapegoated by a desperate ruling class trying to maintain dominance through fear and repression.

The fascistic turn of the Trump administration is a harbinger of a broader assault on all workers and youth. As the capitalist crisis deepens and inequality grows ever more grotesque, the ruling elite is preparing to respond to unrest and opposition with brute force.

This administration of, by and for the oligarchy aims to crush opposition. Trump is the blunt instrument of a ruling class that no longer tolerates even the limited democratic forms of the past. His regime is not an anomaly—it is the logical response of a system in collapse.

There is no salvation to be found in the Democratic Party, which rolled out the red carpet for Trump’s second term and offers platitudes while the repression escalates. California’s politicians may voice concern, but they have no solution because they remain bound to the very system that fosters this repression.

The only viable path forward lies in the unity of workers and youth across borders, in a revolutionary struggle for socialism. Students must appeal to workers. The international working class must mobilize to defend these persecuted students and faculty. Solidarity must extend beyond campuses and courtrooms. It must reach into every workplace and neighborhood.

This crackdown is a clear declaration by the state: political dissent will not be tolerated, freedom of speech will be criminalized, and campuses will be transformed into instruments of surveillance and compliance. This is what the capitalist state becomes when it is threatened: a weapon to silence the vast majority.

But this assault can be defeated. The working class possesses the power to bring society to a standstill. Through building independent, socialist organizations and an international movement against war, repression, and exploitation, it can and must resist this descent into authoritarianism.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact