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USCIS Begins Scrutinizing Social Media; Many Student, Faculty and Researcher Visas Revoked

Legal Update

05.08.2025

This article was prepared with the assistance of ABIL, the Alliance of Business Immigration Lawyers, of which Loan Huynh is an active member.

The Trump administration has recently revoked more than 525 student, faculty and researcher visas for a variety of reasons or no reason. The administration has cited “antisemitic activity” as one justification for scrutinizing international students’ social media postings and other communications. The actions have raised First Amendment concerns.

On April 9, 2025, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that it is “considering aliens’ antisemitic activity on social media and the physical harassment of Jewish individuals as grounds for denying immigration benefit requests.” USCIS said this new policy will immediately affect those applying for lawful permanent resident status, foreign students and “aliens affiliated with educational institutions linked to antisemitic activity.”

USCIS said it will “consider social media content that indicates an alien endorsing, espousing, promoting, or supporting antisemitic terrorism, antisemitic terrorist organizations, or other antisemitic activity as a negative factor in any USCIS discretionary analysis when adjudicating immigration benefit requests,” effective immediately.

The efforts to deport foreign students and others have not been confined to addressing antisemitism. The Trump administration has claimed vast authority to do so, including under the little-used Alien Enemies Act of 1798. “All of these tools that exist in the [immigration] statute have been used before, but they use them in a way that causes mass hysteria, chaos and panic with the hope that students won’t get proper legal advice and they’ll just, through attrition, leave the country,” said Jeff Joseph, president-elect of the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

In many cases, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issues orders for students to leave the country immediately, throwing their lives into chaos and interrupting their studies and research. The Trump administration has terminated many Student and Exchange Visitor Program registrations without notice, placed students out of lawful nonimmigrant F-1 status, and ended their employment

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authorizations under Optional Practical Training and Curricular Practical Training. Even permanent residents have been targeted. Reportedly, a variety of reasons (or even no reason) are cited as justification, including traffic violations resolved years earlier. Some students are leaving on their own while others have been detained by immigration authorities.

Meanwhile, some colleges and universities are attempting to address the revocations quietly under threat of having millions in funding yanked. Legal challenges are expected or have already been filed in some cases, with mixed results. The situation is complex and evolving. Stay tuned.