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**Policy Brief: The Scope of Immigration Enforcement Actions Against International Students**

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The Department of State (DOS) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) are aggressively targeting international students, including those without a history of protest, for visa revocation, termination of their status, and removal. Late last month, Secretary Rubio reported that DOS revoked more than 300 student visas and announced a new “Catch and Revoke” program that uses AI-assisted reviews to screen social media posts of student visa holders.<sup>1</sup> Since that time, hundreds more students have had their visas revoked because of encounters with law enforcement, many of which did not result in a conviction. In concert, ICE began to terminate thousands of records of international students, which has significant implications for their immigration status.<sup>2</sup> The administration has not publicly stated their rationale for the ICE termination of SEVIS records, but many report to have some interaction with the police.<sup>3</sup> There is some speculation that AI is involved in the ICE termination process as well, targeting students with arrest records.<sup>4</sup>

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*According to a verified source, ICE has terminated 4,736 SEVIS records since January 20, 2025, the majority on F-1 status.*

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These administrative actions are unprecedented, with a wide-ranging impact and significant due process concerns, as well as a number of open legal questions that will likely require litigation to resolve. AILA issued a [press statement](#) in response to the immigration enforcement targeting international students, as well as a [policy brief](#) that explains the law surrounding these actions.

This policy brief dives into the data collected by attorneys, students, and others across the country. AILA collected **327 reports** of visa revocations and SEVIS terminations from attorneys, students, and university employees. These reports paint a concerning picture of the arbitrary nature of these visa revocations and terminations. Of these reports:

- **50 percent** were on Optional Practical Training (OPT), meaning they had graduated and were employed in the United States.
  - These individuals are unable to work immediately upon the termination of their SEVIS record. The road to re-instating status for those who have already graduated and are employed on OPT is much more difficult and murkier than those who are currently students.
- **50 percent** of these students were from India, followed by 14 percent from China. Other significant countries represented in this data include South Korea, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

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*The top states impacted in this data are Texas, California, New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Arizona, Illinois, Massachusetts, Florida, and Virginia.*

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<sup>1</sup> This data was last pulled on April 16, 2025.

- **57 percent** reported **receiving notice of their visa revocation**. The majority of these notices came by email from the consulate that issued their visa.
- Only **2** students reported any history of engaging in political protests.
- **Notice for SEVIS termination varied significantly across the reports.**
  - Of the reports where it was clear where the notice came from, **83 percent** received notice from only their university.
    - There were a number of reported lags between SEVIS termination and notice of any kind, which may have immigration implications if a student continued to work without knowledge of this termination. This is particularly concerning because the universities are not receiving proactive notice from the federal government that a SEVIS record is terminated.<sup>5</sup> Unless the university seeks out this information or a student prompts their university to check, the student would be unable to take steps to prevent any cascading immigration ramifications.
    - Only **14 percent** reported receiving notice from ICE, all of whom were students on OPT who received an email stating their OPT had been terminated.
    - **7 percent reported receiving no notice at all.** Several students reported that they proactively reached out to ICE through their Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) or discovered that their account was inaccessible, which prompted the discovery of the termination through their school.
- **The stated rationale for the SEVIS terminations was not always consistent with the record.**
  - At least **17 reports** indicate that their SEVIS record was terminated due to a criminal record and/or their visa was revoked when the student does not have a history of interaction with the police and there was nothing in their record that would prompt a visa revocation.

While **86 percent** reported some level of interaction with the police, **33 percent** had their case dismissed, were never charged, or were never prosecuted. These police interactions included:

- **Students who were domestic violence survivors, including:**
  - A Michigan student who called the police during a domestic violence incident. The law of the state required both individuals to be taken into custody, even though the student was the domestic violence survivor. The case was dismissed, and the student had graduated and was working on OPT.
  - Connecticut domestic violence survivor who was arrested along with her abuser, had significant medical records documenting her injuries, and whose case was dismissed.
- **Students who encountered the police for infractions most U.S. citizens would consider a daily occurrence.**
  - A Pennsylvania undergraduate who was issued a speeding ticket for going 70 mph in a 65-mph zone, and another in Kentucky who received a speeding ticket for going 80 mph in a 70 mph.
  - A Missouri graduate student working on OPT that had tickets for illegal parking, not wearing a seatbelt, and expired plates.
  - A nursing student in Texas student arrested for “evading a vehicle” when the police tried to pull them over at night. The student thought it was a fire truck, so they changed lanes to allow them to pass.
  - A California student employed in a STEM field who accidentally missed two items in the self-scan aisle at a national retail chain and the police were called for theft. The case was dismissed.

- A Texas STEM graduate student who was arrested for the “illegal consumption of alcohol by a minor” while exiting a college party. This was dismissed and was disclosed in subsequent visa applications that were approved.

Based on these reports, it is clear that transparency, oversight, and accountability are needed to prevent further arbitrary visa revocations and SEVIS record terminations. Finally, there should be a way for students to appeal SEVIS terminations that are inaccurate without facing a gap in their employment or requiring the university to be involved, given the sheer numbers of those impacted.

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<sup>1</sup> Ali Bianco, *Rubio says State Department has revoked more than 300 student visas*, POLITICO (March 27, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/27/marco-rubio-student-visas-palestine-00005141>;

Marc Caputo, *Scoop: State Dept. to use AI to revoke visas of foreign students who appear “pro-Hamas”*, AXIOS: Politics & Policy (Mar 6, 2025), <https://www.axios.com/2025/03/06/state-department-ai-revoke-foreign-student-visas-hamas>;

Nick Lentz, *Visas of Central Michigan University international students terminated by federal officials, school says*, CBS: CBS Detroit (April 7, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/detroit/news/central-michigan-international-student-records-terminated-homeland/>;

<sup>2</sup> Nick Lentz, *Visas of Central Michigan University international students terminated by federal officials, school says*, CBS: CBS Detroit (April 7, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/detroit/news/central-michigan-international-student-records-terminated-homeland/>.

<sup>3</sup> Kimmy Yam, *Student visa terminations have quickly hit over half of all states. What’s behind it.*, NBC News (April 10, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/international-students-revoked-visas-reasons-why-rcna200313>

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> See University of Washington, *Immigration Update: SEVIS records cancelled*, International Student Services, (April 8, 2025), <https://iss.washington.edu/immigration-update-sevis-records-cancelled/>.