

Trump administration launches witch-hunt of Chinese international students

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On Wednesday May 28, Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced that the State Department would “aggressively revoke visas” for Chinese international students. Nearly a quarter of the international students in the United States are of Chinese origin. Over 270,000 students are at risk of being impacted by this move by the Trump administration.

The statement declared “Under President Trump’s leadership, the U.S. State Department will work with the Department of Homeland Security to aggressively revoke visas for Chinese students, including those with connections to the Chinese Communist Party or studying in critical fields,” referring to the physical sciences and engineering, “We will also revise visa criteria to enhance scrutiny of all future visa applications from the People’s Republic of China and Hong Kong.”

In a comment by Trump responding to the announcement of the revocations of the visas of Chinese students he said:

These countries aren’t helping us. They’re not investing in Harvard ... we are. So why would 31 percent — why would a number so big ? I think they should have a cap of maybe around 15 percent. We have people- want to go to Harvard and other schools, they can’t get in because we have foreign students there. But I want to make sure that the foreign students are people that can love our country.

I don’t have a problem with foreign students. But it shouldn’t be 31 percent. It’s too much, because we have Americans who want to go there, and to other places, and they can’t go there because there’s 31 percent foreigners.

This latest attack draws from the filthiest corners of the history of anti-Chinese chauvinism, from the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, to the violent anti-Chinese pogroms which followed. In addition to promoting division in the working class and diverting anger away from the oligarchs, this move seeks to prepare public opinion for war with China.

“We use every tool that we have to vet and to make sure we know who’s coming in,” State Department spokesperson Tammy Bruce said in a briefing Thursday. “In this particular case, the United States is putting America first by beginning to revoke visas of Chinese students as warranted.”

The State Department and Department of Homeland Security are preparing to initiate a massive witch-hunt against Chinese students. Students will be accused of spying for China on the basis of their ethnic origin. Such a campaign will invariably take on an anti-communist character like the McCarthyite witch-hunts of the Red-Scare in the 1950s.

The planned revocation of Chinese students’ visas is coordinated with the fabricated charge made by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) against Harvard, accusing the university of “coordinating with the Chinese Communist Party on its campus.”

Wednesday’s State Department statement enacts the threats and rhetoric used by Donald Trump and his “border czar,” Tom Homan, in portraying Chinese immigrants as an “invading army” or a “coordinated national security vulnerability” directed by the Chinese government.

This latest attack follows the announcement by the State Department of a pause on interview appointments for international applicants for student and exchange visas, and the attempt to revoke Harvard’s ability to enroll international students.

DHS announced earlier this week that it was revoking Harvard University's ability to enroll foreign students by terminating its Student and Exchange Visitor Program certification. This action, subsequently blocked by court order, would affect Harvard's approximately 6,800 international students from over 100 countries.

The Trump administration's fascistic assault on higher education has caused significant disruption for international students, with many seeking transfers from Harvard and other universities in Trump's crosshairs.

DHS has also demanded extensive records on international students from Harvard as part of a broader crackdown on universities and international students, to proscribe opposition to the Gaza genocide. The Trump administration is developing a system to screen and ban international students based on their political viewpoints.

The ongoing campaign is an attempt to transform universities into surveillance centers and enforcement arms of the state, demanding control over curriculum and student activities. These attacks are part of a drive to establish a dictatorship and abolish democratic rights, carry out mass deportations, and silence dissent.

They are also bound up with escalating tensions between the United States and China as a consequence of Trump's trade war and economic nationalism. The attacks on academia play a critical role in deepening preparations for a war with China. Historically, the Chinese Exclusion era was tied to the development of capitalism in the United States and the early development of US imperialism in the Pacific and East Asia.

The revival of the rhetoric and policies of Chinese exclusion and the attempt to portray Chinese immigrants as an invading army is the domestic expression of the Trump administration's drive for a direct confrontation with China. The Trump administration consciously draws on arguments from and the history of the era of Chinese exclusion and invokes the Supreme Court's 1889 decision in the Chinese Exclusion Case as legal precedent for the actions that have been carried out since the start of the current Trump presidency.

Workers must reject the revival of anti-Chinese sentiment. It will be the working class that will be

forced to pay, in both its working conditions and its lives, in a war with China. Chinese workers and students are not the enemy of American workers and students. The working class of these two countries are allies in the struggle against capitalist exploitation and war internationally.



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