

Donald Trump's policies dim dreams of foreign students, raising fears of deportation

UNITD STATE, MAY 17

Hassan Kamal Wattoo, 25, had received threatening calls for months from Pakistani authorities angry about critical articles he wrote. When he earned a scholarship to study law at the University of California, Berkeley, he jumped at the opportunity to leave Pakistan, and thought he might work in the US after that.

Then came the detentions in the US of non-citizen students for participating in pro-Palestinian protests, the arrest of a woman who had criticised Israel's war in Gaza, the cancellations of hundreds of student visas with little or no explanation and what many have described as an assault by the Trump administration on science and academia.

Now, Wattoo said, he plans to return to Pakistan next week, after he receives his degree. His parents, worried about being harassed at the border, decided against travelling to Berkeley to attend his graduation on Friday, he said.

"That respect in the American system has kind of faded away and been replaced with this bitter animosity," Wattoo said. He described the Trump administration's tactics as "shockingly similar to what I've seen all my life and what I wanted to run away from".

The New York Times asked international students at US colleges and universities to share how the administration's immigration policies had affected them, and 150 readers responded. The Times interviewed 20 of them, many from countries where the State Department has said that free speech is restricted.

Some said they had cancelled spring break or summer travel plans over fears that they might not be allowed back into the US. Others said they now avoid speaking in public about divisive issues or participating in protests that they think could attract the attention of the authorities, such as those in support of Palestinians, labor rights or disability rights.

Many said that they had deleted social media profiles or unfollowed accounts belonging to activists. And several said they had applied to transfer to



universities in Canada or Europe or were considering it.

Of course, there are about 1.1 million international students in the US, and those interviewed by The Times do not necessarily reflect a representative sample.

Nearly all of them said they were committed to staying to complete their degrees. Still, most of those The Times spoke to made clear that, for them, the idea of America as a pillar of free expression and intellectual openness had faded.

Anton Dolmatov, a Ph.D. student at Rice University in Texas, said that it was jarring to see echoes of the fears he had grown up around in Russia emerge in the US.

As soon as Trump was elected in November, Dolmatov, 28, said, he started applying to transfer to schools in Britain because of concerns about what could happen to his student visa.

He cancelled plans to meet his parents in Turkey and a trip to a conference in London because he was concerned about not being allowed back into the US.

"Just think: essentially to escape Russia, to find oneself in a situation where you also have to be concerned about lawlessness and not having your rights respected, for there not to be due process and arbitrary arrests," Dolmatov said. "I wouldn't believe it would happen if I was told it 10 years ago."

He said he had been accepted by three universities in Britain but was waiting to hear how much research funding they could offer.

International students said recent detentions had stoked doubts about whether they could depend on constitutional free speech protections.

In March, Mahmoud Khalil, a leader of pro-Palestinian

demonstrations at Columbia University, was detained by federal agents and remains in custody in Louisiana. The same month, Rumeysa Ozturk, a Tufts University student who had written an article criticising Israel's military offensive in Gaza, was handcuffed by federal agents in plain clothes in front of her apartment building and held for six weeks.

One graduate student from Lebanon said that when she first arrived on her campus in Florida last year, she felt freer to speak out than she had in her home country, where she had received threats for criticising Hezbollah, the Iran-backed militia.

But since Trump took office, she said, she no longer feels comfortable publicly discussing potentially sensitive issues.

"It's made me feel stuck in a way, constantly stressed and unsure about what's safe to say or do," said the student, 23, who like others interviewed for this story requested anonymity because she feared being deported.

A recent graduate who earned a film degree from a university in the western US said the current climate reminded him of his home country, Singapore, where protests are illegal unless pre-approved by the authorities.

In recent weeks, he said, he avoided walking past two anti-Trump protests on campus for fear of even being photographed near them.

The biggest draw of studying in the US, for him, had been the freedom it offered to learn about making films without self-censoring. He no longer feels he can do that and is considering returning to Singapore, he said.

Changes implemented by the Trump administration have resulted in the cancellation of

more than 1,800 visas for students at 238 universities as of May 12, according to an analysis by The Times. The administration reinstated more than 1,100 of the visas but has said it is working on a new system, which could result in some international students losing their legal status again.

In response to questions from The Times about its crackdown on student visas, a White House spokeswoman, Anna Kelly, said that it was a privilege, not a right, to study in the US.

Apparently referring to students who had been penalised for participating in pro-Palestinian protests, Kelly said that secretary of state Marco Rubio "has the right to revoke visas for non-citizens pushing the propaganda of Hamas terrorists who have held Americans hostage".

Despite the uncertainty over visas, many students said they still wanted to get jobs in America after graduation, and that they valued the diversity of US campuses and the economic opportunities the country offered.

Students who travel far from home in hopes of improving their career prospects and having a positive impact on the world "should be prepared to take on this risk, and that's something I decided well before I even came here", said Ryan Li, an 18-year-old Canadian studying at Georgetown University. He was not going to let the shifting political climate dissuade him from studying in the US, he said.

Carlos Noyola, a Mexican student at the University of Notre Dame, said he had begun to feel unwelcome, which he hadn't experienced in his first three years in the US.

On a recent weekend, a bouncer at a bar in Chicago told Noyola that Trump was going to deport him.

The administration's policies are affecting him in other ways, too: With universities offering fewer research positions because of federal funding cuts, he is applying to universities in other countries.

He had grown up with the perception that the US was a superpower, "not only in economic and military terms, but also in intellectual terms", said Noyola, 28.

"I don't want to say that it's over now. Hopefully it's not."

Ukraine, Russia agree to major prisoner swap after rare peace talks in Istanbul

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After days of confusion and theatrics, direct peace talks between Ukrainian and Russian negotiators took place on Friday in Istanbul for the first time since the start of the war and resulted in an agreement to conduct what would be the largest prisoner swap of the conflict.

After the negotiations, which lasted an hour and 40 minutes, the leaders of the Ukrainian and Russian delegations confirmed in news briefings that they had agreed to exchange 1,000 prisoners each in the near future.

The short talks, mediated by Turkey, focused mainly on Ukraine's demand for a ceasefire before any substantive peace negotiations got underway.

"We agreed that each side would present its vision of a possible future ceasefire and would spell it out in detail," said Vladimir Medinsky, the Kremlin aide leading the Russian delegation. "After such a vision is presented, we believe it would be appropriate to also agree

to continue our talks on this."

Medinsky also said that his team would take back Ukraine's request for direct negotiations between President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia and President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine. He did not commit to arranging such a meeting.

Ukraine's defence minister, Rustem Umerov, who led Kyiv's delegation, confirmed that the teams discussed the prisoner exchange, a ceasefire and the possibility of organising a meeting of the two leaders.

Putin, however, has taken aim at Zelensky's legitimacy for months and would most likely be loath to meet the Ukrainian leader.

Zelensky, during a trip to a summit in Albania, accused Putin on Friday of

being "afraid" to meet him in person and turning the Istanbul talks into a "staged, empty process". He demanded new sanctions against Russia's energy sector and banks until Moscow engaged in what he called serious diplomacy.

"Pressure must continue to rise until real progress is made," Zelensky said.

President Emmanuel Macron of France said on Friday that Russia had no desire for a ceasefire and that "increased pressure from the Europeans and Americans" would be required to obtain one.

Zelensky and Macron, alongside the leaders of Britain, Germany and Poland, held a phone conversation with Trump about the matter on Friday, according to Serhiy Nikiforov, the Ukrainian President's press secretary, who did not release additional details.

First Mexican national indicted in US for providing support to cartel designated as terrorist group

UNITD STATE, MAY 17: A 39-year-old woman is the first Mexican national to be indicted in the United States on charges of providing material support to a cartel designated as a foreign terrorist organization, the U.S. Department of Justice said on Friday, citing Texas court documents.

Maria Del Rosario Navarro is, according to the Department of Justice, accused of conspiring with others to provide grenades to Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG), a powerful Mexican cartel that the U.S. in February designated as a terrorist organization alongside other criminal groups across Latin America.

"The arrest of Maria Del Rosario Navarro Sanchez should send a clear message to people who wish to align themselves with terrorist groups that they will be sought out and held to the

highest extent of the law," FBI Director Kash Patel said in the statement.

Navarro was also charged with "conspiracy to smuggle and transport aliens in the United States, straw purchasing and trafficking in firearms, bulk cash smuggling conspiracy, and conspiracy to possess a controlled substance with intent to distribute," the Justice Department added.

Two Mexican men are, together with Navarro, also facing gun trafficking charges in a Texas court.

Mexican Security Minister Omar Garcia Harfuch had earlier this month confirmed the arrest of Navarro, whom he described as a CJNG operator, as part of a federal-level operation in Mexico's western Jalisco state.

"The Justice Department thanks its Mexican law enforcement partners," the U.S. department added.

Boeing may dodge criminal trial over 737 Max crashes as DOJ weighs new deal: Report

UNITED STATE, MAY 17

Boeing may avoid a high-stakes criminal trial over the deadly 737 Max crashes as U.S. prosecutors weigh a tentative nonprosecution agreement, people familiar with the matter told Reuters.

The development comes just a month after the U.S. Justice Department said the aviation giant had agreed to plead guilty to defrauding regulators — a move that now appears to be in flux.

During a private meeting on Friday, prosecutors informed relatives of crash victims that Boeing no longer intends to admit guilt, citing complications after a judge previously rejected a similar deal.

The Boeing 737 Max crisis began with two deadly crashes occurring within six months: Lion Air Flight 610 in October 2018 and Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 in



March 2019, which together claimed 346 lives.

Investigators linked both accidents to a flight-control system called MCAS, which repeatedly forced the planes' noses down.

Boeing was accused of failing to fully disclose the system to pilots and regulators.

A criminal fraud charge, filed in 2021, accused Boeing of misleading the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) during the Max's certification process.

Prosecutors are now said to be deliberating whether to finalise the

nonprosecution agreement that would require court approval or proceed with the scheduled June 23 trial.

As of now, no final decision has been taken, and formal negotiations over terms have not begun. Both Boeing and the DOJ declined to comment on the ongoing discussions.

The 737 Max crisis has already cost Boeing billions and led to a shakeup at the top.

After a global grounding in 2019, and again briefly in early 2024 after a door panel blew out mid-flight, scrutiny of Boeing's safety practices only intensified.

US Supreme Court keeps in place block on Donald Trump's deportations under wartime law

UNITED STATE, MAY 17

The U.S. Supreme Court on Friday kept in place its block on President Donald Trump's deportations of Venezuelan migrants under a 1798 law historically used only in wartime, faulting his administration for seeking to remove them without adequate legal process.

The justices, in a brief and unsigned opinion, granted a request by American Civil Liberties Union attorneys representing the migrants to maintain the halt on the removals for now. The court on April 19 had ordered a temporary stop to the administration's deportations of dozens of migrants being held at a detention center in Texas.

Trump's deportations are part of the Republican president's immigration crackdown since he returned to office in January.

ACLU lawyers had asked the Supreme Court to intervene after they reported on April 18 that the administration was set to imminently remove the migrants without the required notice or opportunity to contest the removals.

The justices on Friday agreed.

"Under these circumstances, notice roughly 24 hours before removal, devoid of information about how to exercise due process rights to contest that removal, surely does not pass muster," the court wrote in its ruling. Due process generally requires the government to provide notice and an opportunity for a hearing before taking certain adverse actions.

Conservative Justices Samuel Alito and Clarence Thomas publicly dissented from Friday's decision. Alito wrote in an opinion that he did not think the Supreme Court had the power to weigh in at this stage of the case and questioned whether providing relief to the detainees as a group was legal.

The court ordered the New Orleans-based 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which handles cases arising from Texas, to determine the procedures that must be accorded to the migrants "to satisfy the Constitution in this case."

The Supreme court, meanwhile, clarified that the administration was free to pursue deportations under other provisions of U.S. immigration

law.

The interests of the detainees in the case were "particularly weighty" given the Trump administration's claim in a separate case that it is unable to return to the United States a Salvadoran man who had lived in Maryland and was erroneously deported to El Salvador, Friday's ruling said.

This was the second time that Trump's actions concerning Venezuelan migrants had come before the Supreme Court in a legal dispute that has raised questions about his administration's willingness to comply with limits set by the nation's highest judicial body.

Lawyers for the migrants said that administration officials had not provided the migrants held at the Bluebonnet immigration detention facility the opportunity for judicial review to contest the removals to a prison in El Salvador before many were loaded on buses headed to the airport - in violation of a prior order by the justices. The Supreme Court on April 7 had placed limits on how deportations under the Alien Enemies Act may occur even as the legality of that

law's use for this purpose is being contested. The justices required that detainees receive notice "within a reasonable time and in such a manner" to challenge the legality of their removal.

The administration accuses the migrants of being members of Tren de Aragua, a criminal gang originating in Venezuelan prisons that the State Department has designated as a foreign terrorist organization. Trump has invoked the Alien Enemies Act in a bid to swiftly deport them.

Relatives of many of the hundreds of deported Venezuelans and their lawyers have denied that they are Tren de Aragua members and have said they were never given the chance to contest the administration's allegations of gang affiliation.

The Alien Enemies Act authorizes the president to deport, detain or place restrictions on individuals whose primary allegiance is to a foreign power and who might pose a national security risk in wartime. The U.S. government last invoked the Alien Enemies Act during World War Two to intern and deport people of Japanese, German and Italian descent.