

# *U.S. judge blocks Trump effort to bar Harvard from enrolling foreign students*

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Students walk outside Harvard Yard at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts [Faith Ninivaggi/Reuters]

The court injunction comes as the university launches a lawsuit calling Trump's actions a

**‘blatant violation’ of its rights.**

Boston, May 23 (RHC)-- A United States judge has issued a temporary restraining order against an effort to prevent Harvard University from enrolling foreign students. Friday's ruling comes in response to an emergency petition filed earlier in the day in the federal district court of Boston, Massachusetts.

In that petition, Harvard sought immediate relief after the administration of President Donald Trump barred it from using a federal government system, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program, that is required for the enrolment of international students.

U.S. District Judge Allison Burroughs agreed with Harvard that the school and its students may suffer harm if the Trump administration's decision is allowed to take effect. Her injunction is set to last for approximately two weeks, and she set hearing dates on May 27th and 29th.

Friday's lawsuit against the Trump administration is Harvard's second in less than two months. The latest is a response to a decision on Thursday announced by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem. Her department oversees the Student and Exchange Visitor Program, and she said she is revoking Harvard's privilege to use the system based on its failure to address Trump administration concerns.

"This administration is holding Harvard accountable for fostering violence, antisemitism, and coordinating with the Chinese Communist Party on its campus," she wrote on social media.

The revocation means that Harvard can no longer accept foreign students. Those already enrolled will need to transfer to another school.

The move represents a major escalation in Trump's pressure campaign against Harvard and other top U.S. universities. He has accused schools of allowing anti-Semitism to fester, promoting "discriminatory" diversity programmes, and pushing ideological slants.

But in Friday's lawsuit, Harvard called the Trump administration's actions a "blatant violation" of the U.S. Constitution and other federal laws.

Barring the prestigious Ivy League school from enrolling its international students would have an "immediate and devastating effect" on the university and the more than 7,000 visa holders in its student body, it argued.

"With the stroke of a pen, the government has sought to erase a quarter of Harvard's student body, international students who contribute significantly to the University and its mission," the complaint said. "Without its international students, Harvard is not Harvard."

Trump's current battle against higher education can be largely traced back to the pro-Palestine protests that broke out on US campuses last year, in response to Israel's war in Gaza. Trump made cracking down on the antiwar protests a centrepiece of his 2024 re-election campaign.

While there have been instances of harassment from participants on both sides of the issue, protest organisers have rejected claims of widespread anti-Jewish sentiment. Some campus protests have even been spearheaded by Jewish students and organisations, including Jewish Voice for Peace.

Earlier this year, task forces at Harvard itself issued two reports, warning about instances of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim bias, as well as anti-Semitism.

Harvard has said it is working to address these concerns. Nevertheless, in April, Harvard became the latest school to receive a list of demands from the Trump administration. The list included reforming its hiring and admissions practices, refusing to admit students deemed "hostile to the American values and

institutions”, doing away with diversity programmes, and auditing academic programmes and centres, including several related to the Middle East.

Harvard rejected the demands and immediately faced a freeze in \$2.2 billion in multi-year grants and \$60 million in multi-year contracts. Several federal agencies have since frozen tens of millions of dollars more in grants to Harvard.

The university responded to Trump’s funding freezes with a lawsuit in April, saying the administration was violating the First Amendment of the US Constitution with its “arbitrary and capricious” cuts.

Trump has also floated revoking Harvard’s tax exempt status, and in April, Noem sent a letter to Harvard first threatening to revoke its Student and Exchange Visitor Program approval if administrators did not send information on any foreign students’ “illegal and violent activities.” At the end of April, Harvard said it had provided all legally required information, without providing further details.

Friday’s lawsuit seeks immediate relief from the Trump administration’s decision to de-certify Harvard’s ability to register foreign students, citing “irreparable harm inflicted by this lawless action.”

In response to the complaint, White House spokesperson Abigail Jackson accused the school of doing too little to address the Trump administration’s concerns. “If only Harvard cared this much about ending the scourge of anti-American, anti-Semitic, pro-terrorist agitators on their campus, they wouldn’t be in this situation to begin with,” Jackson said.

“Harvard should spend their time and resources on creating a safe campus environment instead of filing frivolous lawsuits,” she added.

In a letter to the Harvard community, school President Alan Garber framed Trump’s attack on Harvard’s foreign student body as part of “a series of government actions to retaliate against Harvard for our refusal to surrender our academic independence”.

Garber described the de-certification as evidence of the “federal government’s illegal assertion of control over our curriculum, our faculty, and our student body”.

In its complaint, Harvard said the de-certification has thrown “countless” academic programmes, clinics, courses and research laboratories into disarray. Harvard enrolled nearly 6,800 international students in its current school year, equal to 27 percent of its total enrolment.

On Thursday, Noem also said Harvard could avoid the move if it turned over more information on foreign students, including video or audio of their protest activity over the past five years.

Harvard has maintained it has already met the legal requirements in its disclosures.

{ SOURCE: ASSOCIATED PRESS and NEWS AGENCIES }

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