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Green Card Holders Face Increased Scrutiny as U.S. Immigration Policies Tighten

A German national with a valid green card was detained and allegedly mistreated by ICE in Boston. Meanwhile, a federal judge has temporarily blocked the deportation of a Columbia student whose green card is being revoked under a 1952 immigration law.

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The Trump administration's stated efforts to deport masses of undocumented immigrants from the United States and remove foreign students who participate in pro-Palestinian protests on university campuses seem to have expanded into increased scrutiny towards legal residents as well.

“We have seen a disturbing trend from the federal government to target people who have legal immigration status,” said Gregory Chen, senior director of government relations for the American Immigration Lawyers Association.

On Friday, a New Hampshire resident with a valid green card was detained in Boston by immigration officers and subjected to what his family said was horrific treatment.

Fabian Schmidt, an electrical engineer, is a German national who obtained his green card in 2008. The card was reportedly recently renewed, and Mr. Schmidt, who has an American wife and daughter, had no pending legal issues. However, when he returned from a trip to Luxembourg on Friday, he was stopped at the Boston Logan airport by Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials.

Mr. Schmidt's family says that while they were waiting for hours with no word from their loved one, he was being “violently interrogated” by immigration officials, resulting in his eventual hospitalization.

Astrid Senior, his mother, said that Mr. Schmidt was stripped naked, forced into a cold shower, and denied adequate food and water. During his interrogation, immigration officials reportedly pressured him to give up his green card. He allegedly was also denied access to medication for anxiety and depression. At one point, he reportedly collapsed and was taken to hospital, where they discovered that he had influenza. Ultimately, Mr. Schmidt was transferred to an ICE detention facility in Rhode Island, where he remains.

According to his family, authorities would only say that his green card had been flagged. His family has now retained attorneys who are now attempting to secure his release on bail.

Mr. Schmidt's prior criminal history includes a 2015 misdemeanor marijuana possession charge, which was subsequently dismissed after cannabis laws changed. He also received a DUI charge around the same time, which his mother said has since been fully paid off. Revoking a green card on those grounds “would be an extreme case, but it is possible under the law,” said Cornell Law School immigration law professor Jaclyn Kelley-Widmer.

Meanwhile, a federal judge has temporarily blocked the deportation of Mahmoud Khalil, the Columbia University graduate student who is being detained due to his role in on-campus pro-Palestinian protests. His green card, said the Department of Homeland Security, would be revoked under a rarely used provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which gives the Secretary of State the authority to remove individuals who are adversely affecting U.S. foreign policy. Baher Azmy, one of Mr. Khalil's lawyers, said that the statute has been rarely used, outside of “ugly historical precedents, including the Red Scare and McCarthyism.” Mr. Khalil is scheduled for an immigration hearing on March 27.

?In a recent press briefing, Secretary of State Marco Rubio addressed the revocation of green cards for individuals supporting organizations deemed harmful to U.S. interests. He said that such actions are not about free speech but about national security and adherence to U.S. laws. Rubio stated, “If you actually end up doing that once you’re in this country on such a visa, we will revoke it, and if you end up having a green card... we’re going to kick you out.” ?

In a March 7 letter to the Department of Homeland Security, Rubio identified a second legal permanent resident as a target for deportation, alongside Mr. Khalil. The name of that individual has yet been made public.

