

U.S. immigration agents abduct PhD student in escalating crackdown on anti-genocide campus protests



Rumeysa Ozturk, a Turkish doctoral student at Tufts University in Massachusetts

Boston, March 27 (RHC)-- Agents of the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) have detained a PhD student in Boston after the administration of President Donald Trump terminated her student visa.

Rumeysa Ozturk, a Turkish doctoral student at Tufts University, was arrested in a street in the town of Somerville, Massachusetts, the school's president said in a statement, over expressing pro-Palestine leanings in an article she co-authored.

In a statement on Wednesday, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said that Ozturk's student visa was "terminated" due to her alleged "activities in support of" the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas, which Washington has designated as a "terrorist organization."

Her visa "is a privilege not a right," said the statement, adding that "glorifying and supporting terrorists who kill Americans is grounds for visa issuance to be terminated," alleged DHS Spokeswoman Tricia McLaughlin in an X post, without pointing to any specific evidence of the Turkish national's alleged "terror" support.

The 30-year-old student and Fulbright Scholar had penned an op-ed article in the student newspaper The Tufts Daily in March 2024, criticizing Tufts' "wholly inadequate" response of the anti-Israel protests, urging the university to divest from Israel, a key demand of the movement.

Ozturk, a former Columbia University student, was "ambushed" by ICE agents while heading out for dinner with friends from her off-campus apartment, according to a statement from her attorney, Mahsa Khanbabai, provided to the Boston Globe.

A dramatic video, taken by a neighbor's surveillance camera, dated March 25, shows a plainclothes federal agent approaching Ozturk on the street, followed by several other agents surrounding her before she was taken into custody. One of the agents was seen snatching the phone from her hand, then putting her hands behind her back and handcuffing her.

Over one thousand protesters poured into Powder House Square near the Tufts campus Wednesday. Lea Kayali of the Palestinian Youth Movement spoke at the rally.

"We had hundreds of Bostonians coming out here today because they are angered about what happens when one of our community members was taken by armed agents of the state, who kidnapped her from outside of her home. People are here to stand up for the movement that she was punished for supporting, the movement for a free Palestine and to end the genocide in Gaza. And they're also here to continue to support our immigrant neighbors, who have been getting picked up by ICE ever since, you know, not just Trump came into office, but Biden before him and every administration. So we are out here to continue to demand a free Palestine, to demand ICE out of our communities and to fight for collective liberation."

[SOURCE: DEMOCRACY NOW and NEWS AGENCIES]

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