

U.S. to screen social media of visa applicants who spent time in Gaza

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Washington, April 18 (RHC)-- U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has ordered the State Department to review the social media accounts of foreign applicants for United States visas who have visited the Gaza Strip in the past 18 years, according to an internal cable seen by the Reuters news agency.

The cable covers all immigrant and non-immigrant US visas – including students and tourists – of people who have spent “any length of time in an official or diplomatic capacity” in Gaza on or after January 1, 2007.

Employees and volunteers at nongovernmental organisations will also be subjected to U.S. screening. If the social media review uncovers any “potential derogatory information relating to security issues” then

the U.S. visa application will be submitted for an interagency investigation into whether the applicant could pose a national security risk, according to the cable.

The cable was signed by Rubio, who previously told the media that his office has revoked more than 300 visas since the start of this year. They include student visa holders who have criticised Israel's war on Gaza, even though the US Constitution protects the freedom of speech of anyone in the US regardless of their visa status.

The Trump administration has previously said the students' actions pose a threat to US foreign policy. The president has also taken the fight to universities themselves, which have been the site of major protests since the war in Gaza began on October 7, 2023.

Trump's latest battle is with Harvard University. The president froze more than \$2bn in federal funding to the university, after it refused to make policy changes requested by his administration.

They include repealing affirmative action in the admissions process, screening for students who may be "hostile to American values and institutions", and addressing anti-Semitism on campus.

Earlier this week, the Department of Homeland Security said Harvard may be ineligible to host international students over its "radical ideology" and supporting "foreign visa-holding rioters and faculty [who] have spewed anti-semitic hate".

[SOURCE: PRESS TV]

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