

The New 'Ministries of Truth': The Fast Spreading Global Censorship Movement

A censorship movement is rising in the world's democracies—whether it's British citizens charged over social media posts, France's arrest of the owner of the social media platform Telegram, Brazil's shutting down Elon Musk's X for not complying with censorship restrictions, or Mark Zuckerberg's admission that the Biden White House pressured Facebook and Instagram to censor stories it didn't like.

"This anti-free speech movement is the most sophisticated, largest and global movement we have ever faced," says legal scholar Jonathan Turley, author of *The Indispensable Right: Free Speech in an Age of Rage*.

Turley says, "I think the problem with free speech is that every generation has to defend it. And this generation has never been more divided, because they have been told that free speech is going to hurt them."

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A poll last month by the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression found nearly one in three Americans now believe the First Amendment "goes too far."

Democratic vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz told MSNBC in 2022, "I think we need to push back on this. There's no guarantee to free speech on misinformation or hate speech, and especially around our democracy."

On the contrary, the freedom to say what the majority doesn't like is the very foundation of a free society. And yet, that

bedrock freedom is under attack by governments and political leaders.

An investigation by the Foundation for Freedom Online found documents from Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency or CISA that indicate that as recently as 2021, the agency worked with platforms to censor speech by labeling people posting so-called "misinformation" as "domestic threat actors," a possible First Amendment violation. The website showing the operation was then scrubbed from the internet but was found using the "Wayback Machine."

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A CISA spokesman said the agency has never censored anyone, and that the material was probably removed because it created a misunderstanding. But CISA is a part of Homeland Security, which tried to create a disinformation czar.

Documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act from USAID, a State Department program intended to strengthen democracies overseas, show that the agency encourages other nations to censor social media.

In other Western democracies, the censorship situation is even worse.

In Great Britain, a nation most Americans used to consider a bastion of democracy, police charge thousands of citizens each year over their social media posts. One video shows an officer at a man's door telling him, "I'm arresting you for improper use of the electronic communications network."

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