

End the Online Censorship!

Description

Governments, NGOs, and social media companies are using “disinformation” as an excuse to throttle free speech in violation of the UN’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a group of over 130 academics, activists, journalists, and free speech advocates have warned in an open letter.

Published on Wednesday, the [‘Westminster Declaration’](#) was signed by journalists Matt Taibbi, Glen Greenwald, and Julian Assange; psychologists Steven Pinker and Jordan Peterson; and actors Tim Robbins and John Cleese, among more than 100 other luminaries.

“Coming from the left, right, and center, we are united by our commitment to universal human rights and freedom of speech, and we are all deeply concerned about attempts to label protected speech as ‘misinformation,’ ‘disinformation,’ and other ill-defined terms,” the group wrote. [category cultural/ideological divide]

The letter condemned government-led efforts to restrict free speech, naming the UK’s Online Safety Bill and ‘Hate Speech’ bills in Ireland and Scotland as direct threats to freedom of expression. It also denounced social media companies for filtering, labeling, and banning legitimate content at the behest of governments or NGOs.

The extent of this form of censorship was revealed with the publication of the ‘Twitter Files’ last year, which proved that the social media platform (since purchased by Elon Musk and renamed ‘X’) collaborated with the White House to [remove](#) factually correct information about Covid-19, [colluded](#) with the FBI to remove content the agency wanted hidden, [assisted](#) the US military’s online influence campaigns, and [censored](#) *“anti-Ukraine narratives”* on behalf of multiple US intelligence agencies.

In multiple cases highlighted in the ‘Twitter Files’, governments did not directly ask platforms to remove content. Instead, NGOs and academics played that role. In 2021, for example, a group of academics funded by the CIA, Pentagon, US State Department, and other agencies, pressed Twitter to ban users spreading *“true content which might promote vaccine hesitancy.”*

“We do not want our children to grow up in a world where they live in fear of speaking their minds,” the signatories wrote. *“We want them to grow up in a world where their ideas can be expressed, explored and debated openly – a world that the founders of our democracies envisioned when they enshrined free speech into our laws and constitutions.”*

The letter urged governments and tech companies to comply with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that *“everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”*

In conclusion, the letter also called on the general public to *“build an atmosphere of free speech from the ground up by rejecting the climate of intolerance that encourages self-censorship.”*

via RT