

US Government Seizes the Websites of PressTV, Pro-Palestinian Media Outlets and More

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This Tuesday notices were put in place, for users seeking to access a number of websites critical of US foreign policy, notifying them that the US government had seized the domains. According to reports, the majority of the websites taken down were linked to Iran, or supportive of Iran, leading many to the conclusion that this was a targeted takedown of pro-Iran platforms.

In an Orwellian ‘ministry of truth’ styled fashion, without any pre-warning, content platforms such as PressTV have been axed from the Internet. Iran’s state-funded PressTV has already been subjected to takedowns across social media, including having at least eight separate Youtube channels banned and even company emails blocked.

The notice reads for PressTV’s website:

“The domain presstv.com has been seized by the United States Government in accordance with a seizure warrant issued pursuant to 18 U.S.C. 981,982 and 50 U.S.C. 1701-1705 as part of a law enforcement action by the Bureau of Industry and Security, Office of Export Enforcement and Federal Bureau of Investigation.”

If correct, this means that the FBI has been involved in some sort of censorship campaign. [CNN has quoted an unnamed US national security official](#) who allegedly told them that the websites were taken down over alleged “disinformation efforts”. There are also other allegations about the websites being taken down for support of terrorism, however these allegations are not yet substantiated as a reason behind the US governments move.

It is not just PressTV, however, that has been silenced, also a Bahraini independence news outlet based out of the United Kingdom, Lualua, has also been taken down. Similarly, the Al-Masirah website, linked to Yemen’s Ansraallah movement which is currently fighting Saudi Arabia, has also been blocked. On top of this, pro-Palestinian sites such as PalToday has also been targeted.

The Jerusalem Post noted that, in last October, the US Justice Department had announced its [seizure of 92 domains](#) allegedly linked to Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which

was registered as a terrorist organisation by the Trump administration. The IRGC is essentially Iran's second military and is not an independent group, therefore the designation made little sense.

The fact that this has been done, targeting Iran's only English Language news channel, not even a week after the election of the Islamic Republic's new President, [Ebrahim Raisi](#), speaks volumes in and of itself. As someone who has worked with PressTV as a journalist for 3 years, it is truly saddening to see all the work I have done there, and the work of my colleagues, simply disappear due to the arrogance of a US government which has apparently forgotten that freedom of speech and journalism is a right.

Funnily enough, for a country that is portrayed as such an opponent of Freedom of Speech, compared to the US, some of the first journalists allowed to question Iran's President-elect Ebrahim Raisi were reporters from US outlets like CNN.

PressTV is banned from British television and its Youtube channels are repeatedly taken down, with even its UK branch 'PressTV UK' having had its channel banned without strikes or reason. I was working in the UK office at the time that PressTV UK was taken down from Youtube, after roughly 5 attempts to contact Youtube, eventually we gave up with no response or justification given for their action. [The Times later wrote an article](#), in which they practically justified the takedown of the channel, claiming that it spread pro-Tehran and anti-Israel propaganda.

Apparently if you say anything that supports Iran or its allies you are now a target, because free speech only goes as far as saying things that the government doesn't mind you saying in the West. It is obvious that in many countries around the world people live under dictatorships, and so censorship is expected. The problem with the West is that it claims to stand by free speech principles and democratic values, although this is clearly not the case, making it worse than the dictatorships due to the hypocrisy of it all. At least people living in a dictatorship like in Saudi Arabia, know full well that they have no right to say what they feel, but in the United States and elsewhere in the West you are told you can speak freely, only to later suffer the consequences. Now, through the power of internet giants, that right is largely being dismantled.

There is a lot of talk about racism in the West at this current moment, even US law enforcement agencies have stated that the biggest threat of terrorism [comes from White Supremacists](#), yet White Supremacist websites are still up all over the web. So how seriously are Western governments taking the issue if they come after Iranian news outlets first?

Racist hate is often created out of an irrational fear of the unknown or unfamiliar, which is what the US government and media are currently creating and abusing when it comes to their narrative around Iran and its people. Before any war, racist policies, or genocides are undergone, first the voices of the group they are targeting must be silenced and then the disinformation about them must be spread. In order to make American's and other Westerners fear Iran and its allies, they must first take away their voice and portray them as the enemy.

If people learn the Iranian perspective, the Palestinian perspective, the Yemeni or Bahraini perspective, then they are less likely to support killing these people and will likely take a more diplomatic stance when it comes to conflict. In my opinion, killing the voices of these

groups and others is the first step towards racist hate crimes and even racist war crimes being committed. It is dangerous, and immature, and if Westerners truly cared about stopping such irrational hate, they would oppose this ridiculous censorship and take to the streets to let their governments know about it. However, it is unlikely that we will see such actions from the so-called “anti-racists,” who wouldn’t understand the term if Jim Crow and Apartheid hit them in the face.

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Michel Chossudovsky

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