

Biden-Harris campaign demands increased censorship by Facebook before 2020 election

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2 October 2020

The campaign of Democratic Party presidential and vice-presidential candidates Joseph Biden and Kamala Harris published an open letter on Monday demanding that Facebook increase political censorship on its platform before the general election on November 3.

In the three-page letter from campaign manager Jen O'Malley Dillon, addressed to Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, the Biden-Harris camp states that the social media platform is "the nation's foremost propagator of disinformation about the voting process," and demands that posts from the Trump campaign be removed.

Dillon writes that Facebook has failed to live up to its September 3 commitment to fulfill its "responsibility to protect our democracy" and "fight misinformation." Instead, she says, Facebook has allowed the Trump campaign "to use your platform to spread falsehoods about mail voting." She adds that "rather than seeing progress, we have seen regression."

Dillon gives specific examples of Trump campaign content that she claims should have been removed by Facebook. In one instance, Dillon writes, Donald J. Trump, Jr. posted a video on September 21 "claiming that those who oppose his father have a 'plan to add millions of fraudulent ballots that can cancel your vote and overturn the election.' He then implores viewers not to let this happen." According to Dillon, he then urges "every able bodied man and woman to join an army for Trump's election security."

Many corporate news organizations, along with the Biden-Harris campaign, pointed out to Facebook that Trump Jr.'s post violated the social media platform's policy against misinformation about the elections. Dillon writes, "Your response was that the video yielded 'extensive discussions,' which reached the conclusion that it was consistent with your policies." In the end, Facebook placed a banner at the bottom of the post that says, "Voting by mail has a long history of

trustworthiness in the US and the same is predicted this year (Source: Bipartisan Policy Center)."

In response, Dillon writes, "No company that considers itself a force for good in democracy, and that purports to take voter suppression seriously, would allow this dangerous claptrap to be spread to millions of people. Removing this video should have been the easiest of easy calls under your policies, yet it remains up today."

Dillon describes the president's repeated use of Facebook to encourage supporters who have voted by mail "to show up at their polling place and demand to vote again unless it is demonstrated that their vote has been counted." Claiming that these posts violate Facebook's prohibition of "misrepresentations about voting logistics, methods, or requirements," Dillon writes that "the solution should have been simple: remove Mr. Trump's posts, which violate your policies."

The demand by the Biden-Harris campaign that Facebook remove political content from its platform is not the first time that the Democrats have called for censorship measures from the world's number one social media company, with 2.7 billion users worldwide and 235 million in the US (72 percent of the population).

The Biden campaign sent an open letter to Facebook on June 29 in response to Mark Zuckerberg's announcement that the platform was reviewing policies regarding "authoritative information about voting." In that letter, the Democrats called for increased censorship and demanded that Facebook confirm that it would remove posts on a range of topics and refuse to make exceptions for politicians such as Donald Trump and "right-leaning publications."

Going back to the defeat of their presidential candidate Hillary Clinton by then-Republican nominee Donald Trump in 2016, the Democrats have been engaged in a steady campaign—in cooperation with US intelligence—over unsubstantiated claims of "Russian

interference,” “foreign misinformation” and “coordinated inauthentic behavior” on Facebook.

One year ago, during a hearing before the House Financial Services Committee, Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez demanded that Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg “take down lies” on the platform. As the *World Socialist Web Site* explained at the time: “The basic assumption of the first amendment is that the government does not know what is a ‘fact’ and what is a ‘lie.’ It is for the electorate to decide for themselves, and not the business of the government, or corporations acting on its behalf, to force-feed ideas to the public.”

Over the past year, Facebook and the other major social media giants such as Twitter and YouTube have been working directly with US intelligence agencies to censor online content, especially socialist publishers and websites, in order to defend the capitalist two-party system against a growing movement to the left by workers and young people. This process has been accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic and the disastrous response of the entire ruling class to it.

On September 24, in cooperation with the US imperialist think tank Atlantic Council and its Digital Forensic Research Lab (DFRL), Facebook removed hundreds of accounts, pages, groups and Instagram accounts from three networks deemed to be engaged in “coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB) on behalf of a foreign or government entity.” Facebook claimed all three networks originated in Russia.

In announcing the Facebook censorship moves, Nathaniel Gleicher, head of security policy, wrote that a primary concern about the “Russia-based networks” is the threat of “hack-and-leak” operations “where a bad actor steals sensitive information, sometimes manipulates it, and then strategically releases it to influence public debate.”

Although, Gleicher writes, “we have not seen the networks we removed today engage in these efforts, or directly target the US 2020 election, they are linked to actors associated with election interference in the US in the past, including those involved in ‘DC leaks’ in 2016.”

In other words, Facebook is claiming—on behalf of US intelligence—that censorship of such organizations is necessary to prevent a repeat of the hack of Democratic Party email servers that exposed the criminality of the Democratic National Committee and the lies of candidate Hillary Clinton during the 2016 primary campaign, information that was then spread in a viral manner on

social media.

One of the networks, from which Facebook removed “one Page, five Facebook accounts, one Group and three Instagram accounts,” is called United World International (uwidata.com). The organization describes itself as “an independent analytical center, where politologists and experts in international relations from different countries will exchange opinions and their views of outstanding political situations.”

Facebook’s Gleicher claims this “small network originated in Russia and focused primarily on Turkey and Europe, and also on the United States.” Gleicher further states, “Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identity and coordination, our investigation found links to individuals associated with past activity by the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA).” Gleicher gives no evidence to prove any of these assertions.

Behind both the demands of the Democratic Party for increased censorship and the actual censorship actions of Facebook is the deepening political crisis and attack on democracy in the US. The Biden campaign is calling upon Facebook to censor the posts of the Trump campaign while largely ignoring the fact that the president and his supporters are engaged in a criminal conspiracy to mobilize fascist squads to intimidate or commit acts of violence against voters, and to overthrow the US Constitution by refusing to leave office regardless of the election result.

For its part, the intelligence state is moving to shut down left-wing and socialist publishers on Facebook out of fear that the working class and youth will move outside of the confines of the capitalist two-party system and begin to organize their own response to the moves by Trump to establish a presidential dictatorship in the US. All factions of the ruling establishment are united in their efforts to shut down the growing influence of the revolutionary socialist program advanced on social media and the internet by the *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Party.



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