

Twitter ends suspension of IYSSE account after widespread opposition

Our reporter
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Following a global outpouring of opposition from WSWS readers, workers and young people, and prominent defenders of democratic rights, Twitter has restored the account of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in the United States.

This is an important development in the struggle for civil liberties and against online censorship.

In an email late last night, Twitter wrote: “We’ve decided to unsuspend your account.” The message did not contain further information on the reasons for the suspension of the IYSSE account on November 13, or the decision to overturn the effective ban.

A week ago, the moderators of the IYSSE account noticed that its profile and header image had been removed. In place of its timeline, where content is posted, was a declaration from Twitter: “Account suspended: Twitter suspends accounts that violate the Twitter Rules,” along with a link to those regulations.

In response to a demand from the IYSSE for the reinstatement of the account, Twitter wrote “Your account was suspended because it appears you may be managing a number of Twitter accounts.”

The IYSSE noted that it was a movement with chapters at colleges throughout the US, each of which had their own Twitter account. Because they fought for the same perspective, the separate accounts sometimes posted the same links from the WSWS. But this practice, of different chapters of an organisation posting similar content, was explicitly permitted in Twitter’s rules.

The IYSSE immediately initiated a public campaign. The WSWS posted articles warning that the suspension of the account was an attack on democratic rights, in line with an escalating drive by the authorities and the social media companies to censor the internet.

These noted that the suspension of the account coincided with the unprecedented political crisis in the US, following the presidential elections. It served, moreover, to limit the ability of the IYSSE, as the youth wing of the Socialist Equality Party, to bring a genuine socialist and internationalist perspective to young people, amid rapidly growing anti-capitalist sentiment.

An appeal from the IYSSE for statements of protest on Twitter, demanding the reinstatement of the account, was taken up by many users of the social media platform from all corners of the globe.

On Sunday, Roger Waters, the famed musician and co-founder of Pink Floyd, posted: “Twitter has banned the International Youth and Students for Social Equality [IYSSE]. It is critical that people are informed of this effort to censor them.” Waters’ tweet has been shared more than one thousand times, and liked by well over 3,000 users, while his Facebook post has received a similar audience.

The posts by Waters, who has also fought for the freedom of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and against the oppression of the Palestinians, were greeted by hundreds of supportive comments.

“Students, by nature, tend to be receptive to objective truth and cognisant of injustice. These qualities make them question propaganda and rebel against war. The last thing the ruling class wants is an organised, class-conscious student movement,” one stated.

Another responded “Why is @Twitter afraid of students? This is bullying, cowardly and is #censorship of free speech regardless how the excuses are dressed up. Who knew social media only exists to protect US interests[?] The global community should remove US tech dependency.”

Andreja Pejic, a well-known international model,

posted a tweet on her own page, stating: “Dear Twitter restore @IYSSE_US, @TwitterSupport. Stop censoring the world web. Stop censoring reputable left publications/organizations. Especially those that have been the most vocal opponents of fascism.”

Similar posts were issued by working people and youth, as well as IYSSE members and chapters in the US and around the world.

A statement from a Mexican Twitter user, for instance, declared: “The account of @IYSSE_US continues to be censored. Twitter and Facebook try to skew the thinking of young people....War generates death but also wealth, and if you organize to report it, you will be censored.”

Messages opposing the censorship were posted in Japanese, German, Sinhalese, Tamil, French and a number of other languages, testifying to the global scope of the IYSSE’s campaign.

The restoration of the account was undoubtedly influenced by this important international response.

The reversal of the suspension underscores the necessity of a global campaign against online censorship, and for internet freedom, as part of a broader struggle against the turn to authoritarianism by the capitalist ruling elites around the world.



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