

Twitter locks Socialist Equality Party (Australia) account over video defending Dr David Berger, Julian Assange and free speech

Oscar Grenfell
22 July 2022

In a significant act of political censorship, Twitter yesterday locked the account of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia), rendering it unable to post content, issue replies or send messages. In effect, such a lock disables an account.

The ban was imposed Thursday morning Australian time. A notification sent to the SEP account declared that it had violated unspecified rules and was locked for 12 hours. The message provided a link to Twitter's general user guidelines. There was no means of appealing the decision.

Concurrently, a video previously posted on the SEP account was hidden by Twitter administration. Where the video had been, a Twitter statement declared: "This Tweet violated the Twitter rules."

The video in question is 59 seconds long and draws attention to official attacks on four individuals who have been singled out for their free speech activities. The video was posted as part of the SEP's campaign in defence of Dr David Berger, an Australian general practitioner who has been targeted for opposing the official "let it rip" program of mass COVID infection.

The video can be viewed on the SEP's Instagram and Facebook accounts. It can also be viewed below.

After the 12-hour ban had elapsed, Thursday night Australian time, the SEP account remained locked. A message from Twitter administrators declared that the sanction had been imposed for, "Violating our rules against posting or sharing privately produced/distributed intimate media of someone without their express consent."

For the account to be unlocked, the message declared that the SEP "must delete" the video. SEP administrators have lodged an appeal against this edict, which had not been answered at the time of publication. The SEP's

Twitter account remains locked.

The stated grounds for the censorship are absurd and bizarre.

None of the visual content in the video is of an "intimate" character. All of it is in the public domain, with common licensing provisions, or has been directly provided to the *World Socialist Web Site* and published there previously.

Three of the four individuals referenced and depicted in the video have collaborated with the *World Socialist Web Site*, including by providing their images. The fourth, WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange, is currently incarcerated in Britain's maximum-security Belmarsh Prison without regular internet access.

In other words, it is patently clear that if there was a complaint related to the video content, it did not come from any of those who were featured. The claim of "intimate" content is patently false. Notably, the lock was imposed within minutes of the video having been posted yesterday morning, indicating the possibility of a rapidly coordinated campaign aimed at suppressing the content.

It is striking that the video which has been subjected to censorship, was itself about the censorship of principled workers and public figures, who have taken a stand against the powers-that-be. It is worth briefly reviewing who they are:

* The WSWS reported earlier this month that **Dr David Berger** had been censured by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). The official body has demanded that he undertake special "education" or face deregistration and has accused him of "undermining" public health messaging.

Berger's "crime" has been to condemn the "let it rip" policy of all Australian governments, based on allowing the virus to spread endlessly. He had consistently

advocated the scientifically-grounded measures required to eliminate transmission, which are rejected by the authorities because they may impact upon corporate interests.

The attack on Berger occurs amid a new global wave of the virus, including in Australia. State and federal governments, Labor and Liberal alike, have rejected any measures to combat the surge, under conditions in which almost 9,000 people died this year alone and more than eight million of Australia's 25 million people have been infected.

Berger's plight has been completely blacked-out by the corporate media.

* **Lisa Diaz** is a British worker who organised a series of powerful parents strikes, opposing the forced reopening of the schools under conditions of rampant COVID transmission. The in-person schooling policy serves no other purpose than to ensure that parents can be in their workplaces so that full business and profit-making activities can continue, whatever the consequences.

In late 2021, Diaz was threatened with a malicious prosecution by local council authorities because she refused to endanger her children in a COVID-infested school. Her principled campaign has won support from medical experts, teachers, parents and other workers around the world.

* **David O'Sullivan** is a London bus driver who was victimised and fired for campaigning against the mass infection of transport workers, under conditions where dozens of his colleagues had died from the virus. He took action, independently of the unions, which have enforced the dangerous COVID policies, and has won respect from transport workers worldwide.

O'Sullivan, like Diaz, has given repeated interviews to the WSWS and has been a featured speaker at international online events that it has held.

* **Julian Assange** is the world's most famous political prisoner. He is incarcerated in Britain and faces extradition to the US, which has issued 17 Espionage Act charges against him for publishing true documents that exposed war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. If dispatched to his US persecutors, Assange faces 175 years imprisonment.

The decade-long campaign against Assange, involving multiple governments, including in the US, Britain and Australia, is the high-point of a broader effort by the ruling elites to suppress anti-war opposition and establish a precedent for victimisations targeting the emerging struggles of the working class. Assange has been the

subject of obsessive pursuit by the intelligence agencies and their creatures, including on social media, for at least 12 years.

In other words, the individuals featured in the video have all fought for the social and democratic rights of working people, in opposition to the homicidal COVID policies and militarism and war. In the process, they have earned the ire of powerful political forces.

Twitter's ban, therefore, raises obvious questions. If there were a complaint about the video, why did the social media giant immediately lock the entire account of the SEP, without any means of appeal, for 12 hours? Such an action has not been taken since the account was created in 2010.

Why, more than 24 hours after the ban was introduced, has the video not been cleared? A cursory examination of its contents by any objective human evaluator would conclude that the claims that the video contains "intimate media" are a nonsense.

A tweet by SEP Australia National Secretary Cheryl Crisp demanding an explanation for the ban, and its immediate reversal, was issued from her personal account at 4:47 p.m. (AEDT) on Thursday. It tagged Twitter Support, the department responsible for dealing with such matters. Currently, the post has received more than 370 likes and over 165 retweets. It has not been acknowledged or responded to by Twitter Support.

This situation cannot be tolerated. It sets a precedent for attacks on other Twitter pages and posts that oppose the "let it rip" program, war and other attacks on the rights of the population. It threatens a broader crackdown on any left-wing political alternatives advanced on Twitter.

We appeal to all WSWS readers and defenders of democratic rights to share this article on Twitter, with a caption above directed to @TwitterSupport, demanding an immediate reversal of the lock and a full explanation of why it was imposed. Share the censored video on other social media platforms and alert your friends, family and co-workers to this attack!



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact