YouTube demonetizes antiwar website MintPress News

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YouTube, the video sharing and social media platform owned by Google parent Alphabet, Inc. has demonetized the channel of the antiwar news website MintPress News (MPN). The move blocks MPN from collecting revenue when viewers watch their content.

The *World Socialist Web Site* unequivocally condemns this act of political censorship by Youtube, and calls on readers to demand that this attack on MPN be lifted immediately.

The censorship measures against MPN takes place against the backdrop of a systematic attack on the freedom of expression and amid a crackdown on protests and opposition to the genocide being carried by the Israeli government Gaza with the backing of US and European imperialism.

Alan MacLeod, MPN's Senior Staff Writer and Podcast producer, told the WSWS, "This is clearly an attempt to shoot the messenger; to make crucial reporting like ours financially unsustainable. It therefore represents an attack on watchdog journalism itself."

Since its founding in 2011, MPN has exposed the war crimes of US imperialism in the Middle East and Africa as well as the criminal actions of the apartheid regime in Israel against Palestinians in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza.

Through original investigative reports, podcasts and videos, MPN has exposed the lies told by the pro-US and pro-Israel corporate media about the siege of Gaza and ethnic cleansing operation of the Netanyahu government and Zionist military that has been underway since October 7.

MacLeod said that the online news outlet has been prevented from generating advertising income from its videos on YouTube since earlier this fall.

Additionally, MPN reports that many of its YouTube videos have been designated as "age-restricted" with a warning that says, "The following content may contain graphic or violent imagery" and "Viewer discretion is advised." These tactics are clearly aimed at limiting the number of viewers of the videos.

In one such YouTube video entitled "War Crimes Committed by Israel," for example, MPN founder and editor Mnar Adley exposes how the corporate media is reporting on Israel's justification for killing civilians as collateral damage as a whitewash of war crimes, "instead of holding Israel accountable for breaking international law."

Adley condemns Israel's genocide in Gaza as "a violation of Article 6 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court," and as a crime against humanity. She says that Israel is guilty of war crimes by intentionally directing attacks against civilians, hospitals, ambulances, medical workers and journalists. Adley says the Israeli assault has left 200 schools damaged, 26 mosques and several churches destroyed in a clear breach of the international prohibition on attacking buildings connected with religion or education.

According to additional information published along with this video, other social media platforms have followed YouTube's lead and taken it down on Facebook and Instagram for violating community standards of promoting "dangerous individuals."

Responding to an inquiry about the censorship, Mnar Adley told the WSWS, "This comes one, after we were banned from PayPal, so we believe this is an organized campaign to target the bank accounts of independent journalists and outlets that hold our military class accountable for their war crimes."

Adley added, "In 2017, YouTube announced its partnership with the ADL [Anti-Defamation League] and appointed it to its board of trusted flaggers. This was the beginning of the crackdown on independent and alternative media source on YouTube that covered war and Israel's crimes against Palestinians that did not toe

the State Department's lines."

The censorship campaign at YouTube described by Adley paralleled the restriction of internet search results of left-wing and antiwar websites identified by the *World Socialist Web Site* in April 2017. In a deliberate effort to suppress the socialist political perspective represented by the WSWS, Google modified its search algorithm "to surface more authoritative content." Google also attempted to disguise its anti-left political censorship as a means of combating "fake news."

As Adley explained further, "The reach for platforms like ours declined dramatically and subscriptions slowed down. This was in line with other shadowbanning and algorithmic sabotage that we face from Google, Facebook and other big tech platforms. We believe our channel getting demonetized was a direct targeting of our news reporting and coverage that challenges the official narratives."

Adley said that a more likely explanation for the demonetization on YouTube was, "because of our antiwar coverage exposing the profiteers and the architects of the permanent war state (which also includes Israel's occupation of Palestine and the crimes it commits against Palestinians). We believe we have been targeted by big tech in an attempt to demonetize our channel. This is a form of economic censorship."

The renewed effort to silence MPN and others is taking place within the context of a campaign by the ostensibly democratic governments in Europe and the US to ban pro-Palestinian protests and to claim falsely that demonstrations against Zionist genocide are antisemitic and should be made illegal. These attempts to censor views that have been embraced by millions of people all over the world are rapidly falling to pieces.

Other recent attempts by YouTube to silence antiwar voices include the demonetization of independent journalist and podcaster Richard Medhurst on November 1. Medhurst, who is a British citizen born in Damascus, Syria has consistently exposed the propaganda lies used by Israel and the corporate media to justify turning Gaza into a "death camp."

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, the website Truthout examined the relationship between the intensification of Israel's genocide in Gaza with the ramping up of a political campaign aimed at criminalizing First Amendment protected speech.

Truthout reported on the attempts by colleges and universities, with the backing of both Democratic and Republican politicians to deactivate pro-Palestinian student clubs on campus on the grounds that they were "providing material support to a foreign terrorist organization." Meanwhile the report says, "Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares recently announced an investigation into American Muslims for Palestine, a nonprofit organization focused on education and advocacy related to Palestinians."

As Truthout explained, "Branding speech which advocates for the human rights of Palestinians as 'antisemitic,' or potentially providing 'material support to terrorists,' and then doxing [publishing the identity of individuals online for the purpose of exposing them to harassment or violence], surveilling or even charging people on that basis has dangerous implications for First Amendment rights to speech, association and assembly."

In spite of these attacks on fundamental rights, the Truthout report says, tens of thousands of college students and others are continuing their protests, "Undeterred by the backlash, college students at more than 100 college campuses have walked out in protest as part of a broad coalition of groups, calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and for the universities to sever ties to arms manufacturers providing weapons to Israel."

In the case of MPN's senior writer Alan McLeod, who has more than 200,000 followers on X/Twitter, his latest podcast points to the fact that the imperialist propaganda campaign is losing the information war.

McLeod writes that while millions of dollars have been spent attempting to flood TikTok and Twitter with pro-Israeli falsehoods, "public polling and global demonstrations indicate that public opinion is increasingly siding with Palestine." This is precisely why the social media platforms have been ratcheting up their online censorship measures.

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