

Right-wing operation forces resignation of BBC head Tim Davie

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Following a political operation led by the Conservative Party and backed by the Trump administration, Tim Davie, the director-general of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), resigned on Sunday. BBC News CEO Deborah Turness also stood down.

This followed days of criticism of the BBC's news coverage, after the *Telegraph* published a leaked internal dossier containing the findings of a former external adviser to its Editorial Guidelines and Standards Committee (EGSC), Michael Prescott.

The criticisms of Prescott—who left his role in the summer—centred on a documentary about Trump which aired in October 2024. Prescott accused the BBC's *Panorama* programme of splicing together clips from separate parts of the infamous speech Trump made in Washington on January 6, 2021, prior to a mob of his supporters invading the Capitol building and attempting to block congressional certification of Joe Biden's presidential victory.

Prescott wrote that the spliced-together version of Trump's comments aired in "Trump: A Second Chance?" had him saying, "We're gonna walk down to the Capitol and I'll be with you and we fight. We fight like hell and if you don't fight like hell, you're not gonna have a country anymore."

In his actual speech, Trump said 15 minutes in, "We're gonna walk down to the Capitol and I'll be with you." The second half of the sentence that was aired by *Panorama*, "and we fight. We fight like hell...", came 54 minutes later.

In an extraordinary response to this spurious complaint, accompanied by claims that Trump, "the President of the United States", had supposedly been misrepresented, the head of the BBC capitulated, lending credence to the false narrative that Trump did not support the violent attempt to overthrow the constitution and prevent the election of Biden.

Everyone knows what Trump's aim was in his January 6, 2021 speech, no matter in what order or when his words came out. On his first day in office for his second term, he signed an executive order granting a full, complete, and unconditional pardon to approximately 1,500 individuals convicted of, or awaiting trial or sentencing for, offenses related to the events that occurred at the Capitol.

Responding to Davie's resignation, BBC presenter Nick Robinson stated on *BBC Radio 4 Today* that while the BBC had made "mistakes" in coverage, "There is also a political campaign by people who want to destroy the organisation that you are currently listening to." He was backed by another BBC veteran John Simpson, who said Robinson was "exactly right".

Another senior journalist, the former political editor of Sky News, Adam Boulton, posted on X that it was "BS [bullshit]" to claim that the BBC were biased in the coverage of Trump in the *Panorama* piece, adding that it was "fake news to suggest Donald Trump did not egg on what happened on 6 January".

Despite this, within just five days of the pro-Tory *Daily Telegraph* publishing a front-page article headlined, "BBC's Trump bias exposed in memo leak", Davie fell on his sword. On Monday, the BBC's cave-in was complete as its chairman Samir Shah, in a letter to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee of MPs, said that Trump's speech was edited in a way that gave "the impression of a direct call for violent action" and "The BBC would like to apologise for that error of judgement."

None of this sated the far-right forces around the would-be American dictator. On Friday, White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt stated that the BBC was a taxpayer funded "leftist propaganda machine" publishing "purposefully dishonest" material and "100% fake news". Trump responded in glee to Davie's resignation and following the BBC's formal apology threatened to sue the

organisation for \$1 billion. His lawyers said the BBC had until 5pm EST (10pm UK time) on November 14 to “comply”.

Every day from Tuesday until Davie’s resignation, the *Telegraph* leaked other parts of Prescott’s letter, setting off an avalanche of right-wing anti-BBC denunciations. Elsewhere in the paper, an article details Prescott’s concerns that the BBC’s Arabic news service chose to “minimise Israeli suffering” in the war in Gaza so it could “paint Israel as the aggressor”. On Wednesday, Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch was interviewed demanding that “heads should roll”.

The fact that Prescott cites content on the BBC Arabic news channel only highlights the fact that the BBC understands the pro-Israel coverage churned out by its main English language news service would be impossible to broadcast in the Middle East.

To complete the right’s set of favourite talking points, Prescott’s other complaints were that the BBC’s coverage of transgender issues was effectively “censored” by specialist LGBT reporters who promoted a “pro-trans agenda”. He also complained that “During my time as an advisor to the EGSC it became clear the BBC fell too easily for putting out ill-researched material that suggested issues of racism when there were none.”

Prescott, who left his role in the summer, ludicrously claimed in his letter written in September 2025 that he has no axe to grind. “I think it is important to state that I have never been a member of any political party and do not hold any hard and fast views on matters such as American politics or disputes in the Middle East. My views on the BBC’s treatment of the subjects covered below do not come with any political agenda,” he wrote.

Prescott is in fact a close friend of Robbie Gibb, a former Downing Street communications director (from 2017 to 2019 under Tory Prime Minister Theresa May) and the brother of a former Tory schools minister Nick Gibb. Robbie Gibb joined the BBC board in 2020 under May’s Tory successor, Boris Johnson. He was a player in the launch of right-wing channel GB News.

In 2021 Gibb headed a consortium who bought the *Jewish Chronicle*, a Zionist newspaper. He authored his own document critical of the BBC in September, the same month as Prescott. The *Guardian* reported Monday it was told by sources that Gibb “was instrumental in the appointment of Prescott as an adviser to the BBC’s editorial guidelines and standards committee.”

The reason for Davie falling on his sword, when many in the BBC were arguing for opposition to Prescott’s

claims, is suggested by his own appointment to head the BBC in 2020 being central to plans to shift it further right.

The WSWS noted on his appointment that after “a career in marketing”, he “stood as a Conservative council candidate in Hammersmith in 1993 and 1994 and was deputy chairman of his local Conservative Party. Taking over, Davie said the BBC had ‘no inalienable right to exist.’ He opposes the subscription model but suggested axing output by up to one-fifth, cutting channels and slashing the BBC’s budget.”

Davie headed a BBC Board stacked with Tory government appointees. For the government and a media demanding more control over the state broadcaster, and ideally its demise, having a Tory as director general was a good start.

This year the Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) provided damning evidence of systematic bias against the Palestinians in the BBC’s coverage of Israel’s genocide. The CfMM report was published after the BBC, under Davie, shelved the documentary “Gaza: Doctors Under Attack”, saying the film “risked creating a perception of partiality”.

But none of this was enough to satisfy the cabal of leading Tories and MAGA Republicans.

After Davie resigned, Nigel Farage, the leader of the far-right Reform UK and a friend of Trump’s, stated that the resignation of Davie and Turness “must be the start of wholesale change. The Government needs to appoint somebody with a record of coming in and turning companies and their cultures around” and “Preferably, it would be someone coming in from the private sector who has run a forward-facing business”.

This is a UK version of *Gleichschaltung*: the Nazi regime’s effort to “bring into line” all aspects of political and cultural life and subordinate them to the state’s ideology. Trump, a known admirer of Hitler and his regime, is seeking to emulate the Nazis in the US with his attack on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting—which is shutting down following his move in July to halt all its funding. This campaign is now being extended to Britain’s state broadcaster and, by extension, the rest of the world’s media.



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