Trump bans 3 media outlets from White House in further step towards dictatorship

Patrick Martin
20 September 2026

In a frontal assault on the First Amendment, President Donald Trump ordered reporters from CNN, MS NOW and Politico barred from the White House for publishing "negative stories" about him. He announced the ban Friday afternoon on social media. When reporters from the three outlets arrived for work Saturday morning, they were turned away at the security gate and their press passes were confiscated.

The president suggested that the two leading US newspapers, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, might also be banned from the White House.

Making his hatred of press freedom explicit, Trump said, "It's sick. I mean, there's something wrong with a country that can allow people to write purposely negative stories. Now, if they want to write them, that's fine. But I don't have to let them into my—into the people's house."

The last verbal slip was revealing of Trump's real attitude to the presidency: the White House is his house. It does not belong to the American people. The government exists for his own self-aggrandizement, both financially and politically. He embraces the monarchical principle going back to Louis XIV of France—L'État, c'est moi (the state, it is me).

Asked by other reporters to explain his action, Trump replied, "Because they're fake news … You get so tired of reading and seeing fake news. When you look at CNN, it's just fake. That's why their ratings are no good. When you look at MS NOW … it's fake news."

"And when you look at Politico," he continued, "the stories they wrote are fake. So there's a lot of news and there may be others to join them, and maybe they can get better. But our country has to have honest news."

This from a president who lies incessantly, claiming the US economy is booming, that the affordability crisis is a "hoax," and that he is hugely popular, despite record mass protests and plunging poll numbers, which threaten a Republican debacle in the midterm elections, only six weeks away.

All three of the targeted media outlets issued statements of protest, and by Sunday all three were reported to be preparing legal challenges. But the giant corporations that own them are confining their response to the courts. The White House Correspondents' Association, whose current president is a Fox News correspondent, issued a statement of support for the banned outlets and nothing more. While the exclusion was the leading topic on most Sunday television interview programs, no section of the corporate media has suggested collective action, such as a joint boycott of White House briefings and press "availabilities." Every other outlet has kept its seat.

Politico followed up its own banning with a lengthy report citing anonymous interviews with "over a dozen current and former Trump officials" who told the news website that they were "puzzled by the development." They pointed out that Trump announced the action on a day when his chief of staff, Susie Wiles, was not at the White House.

Publicly, Trump aides were aggressively defending his media ban. White House trade advisor Peter Navarro appeared on the "War Room" podcast of fascist former Trump aide Steve Bannon and claimed that negative media reports on the conduct of the US war against Iran were "treasonous." He continued, "Whatever you feel about the war. You don't say stuff that's gonna be repeated instantaneously by the Iranian media."

UN Ambassador Michael Waltz, who was Trump's national security adviser until he was removed following the "Signalgate" scandal last year, appeared on CNN's "State of the Union" Sunday and used the

© World Socialist Web Site

platform to denounce the network and defend its exclusion.

Waltz declared, “the president is absolutely within his rights to limit journalists to government facilities, particularly when, in his opinion, they’re not behaving as good faith journalists.” He claimed the media “throws things out there” and “it sticks to people like napalm,” and railed against “garbage gossip journalism.” Significantly, he went on to object to press reporting on US military deployments and the depletion of munitions stockpiles.

Secretary of War Pete Hegseth posted on X Friday that his department “fully supports” Trump’s decision. “We are grateful these outlets already chose to self-deport from the Pentagon,” Hegseth wrote. “They endangered our troops with false stories, leaks, and trafficked in fiction and lies about the President, our Warriors and their mission.”

The reference is to the purge carried out at the Pentagon last October, when the department demanded that reporters sign a pledge not to solicit or publish any information not authorized for release, including unclassified material, or lose their credentials. A federal judge has since struck down parts of the policy. The Pentagon responded with a replacement, which was also blocked, but that ruling has been stayed pending appeal.

Hegseth has also fired the editor and publisher of the *Stars and Stripes*, which has had limited independence, after it reported the dire conditions inside the Navy carrier Abraham Lincoln during its deployment against Iran.

The media exclusion by Trump is not merely from the Oval Office, where Trump reiterated his ban to a group of reporters Friday, but from the entire White House grounds, including the briefing room which is the main workspace for journalists who are assigned to cover the US president.

The Trump administration has not given a press briefing in that room since August 31, when Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt stepped down. No replacement has been named, and it is not clear that there will be one. Over the past 18 months, Leavitt had imposed increasing restrictions on press access to areas of the White House, such as her own office, which had been open to the press under previous administrations, including Trump’s first term.

The ban follows the exclusion of the Associated Press from the Oval Office last year, the Pentagon credential purge and Trump’s multibillion-dollar lawsuits against the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and the BBC. Its timing is bound up with the war against Iran and the approaching elections. As the comments of Navarro, Waltz and Hegseth make clear, a government waging an unpopular war and facing a rout at the polls is moving to brand factual reporting on the war as aid to the enemy.

The targeted outlets are not opponents of American imperialism, and their corporate owners have repeatedly capitulated to Trump, as in the multimillion-dollar settlements paid by ABC and Paramount. Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer compared Trump to a dictator, but the Democrats propose to do nothing. The defense of press freedom and all democratic rights cannot be left to the media conglomerates, the courts or the Democratic Party. It depends on the independent mobilization of the working class against the Trump administration and its drive to dictatorship.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site