

# United States Senate

December 18, 2025

The Honorable Sarah B. Rogers  
Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Under Secretary Rogers,

I write today to express my grave concerns about the threats to American speech and sovereignty posed by an emergent international censorship regime. In recent weeks, the architects of this regime have launched a full-scale bid for control of American public discourse, seeking to impose hard-left ideological strictures on our nation from abroad. We must confront this campaign of foreign subversion with swift and decisive action. I therefore strongly encourage the State Department to impose sanctions and visa restrictions on the foreign individuals and entities involved in this assault on our freedom of speech.

Foreign regulators are attempting to enforce radical new censorship laws against US-based social media platforms like X.<sup>1</sup> In so doing, they have levied an attack on our citizens' liberties by seeking to impose a censorship regime on Americans' ability to speak in the digital public square. These attacks pose a direct challenge to our sovereignty and independence as a nation.

The European Union recently fined X approximately \$140 million under the Digital Services Act (DSA)—the main law the EU wields to impose European censorship standards. While the fine purported to be about “transparency” requirements, that rationale is a ruse. Those mandates are simply a tool the EU uses to facilitate its army of censorial, far-left NGOs' harassment of pro-free speech companies like X under other provisions of the DSA. More broadly, the fine demonstrates the EU claims the power to control the design and speech policies of US-based social media platforms. Indeed, media reports indicate that the EU's broader investigation into X's “hands-off approach to policing user-generated content”—i.e., X's refusal to algorithmically censor Americans' speech according to European bureaucratic diktats—remains ongoing.<sup>2</sup> The EU's message to X is clear: *This fine is a warning—start censoring Americans or else.*

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., STAFF OF H. COMM. ON THE JUDICIARY, 119TH CONG., THE FOREIGN CENSORSHIP THREAT: HOW THE EUROPEAN UNION'S DIGITAL SERVICES ACT COMPELS GLOBAL CENSORSHIP AND INFRINGES ON AMERICAN FREE SPEECH 18–37 (2025).

<sup>2</sup> Adam Satariano & Kate Conger, *Elon Musk's X Hit with \$140 Million Fine in Europe*, N.Y. TIMES (Dec. 5, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/05/technology/eu-elon-musk-x-140-million-fine.html>.

I commend the actions the Trump administration has already taken in the face of these unprecedented attacks against our nation’s sovereign political prerogatives, such as the visa restrictions and sanctions on the Brazilian government officials involved in efforts to censor American speech.<sup>3</sup> As the administration considers additional steps, including potential visa revocations against foreign censors,<sup>4</sup> I fully support these deliberations and encourage the State Department to impose additional sanctions on the foreign individuals, entities, and NGOs responsible for these attacks on free speech.<sup>5</sup>

The *Missouri v. Biden* lawsuit I filed as Attorney General of Missouri helped reveal how the Biden administration created a domestic censorship-industrial complex to wield against Americans.<sup>6</sup> Central to that censorship regime was the State Department—particularly the Global Engagement Center.<sup>7</sup> Part of the State Department’s model was to use the Global Engagement Center and a cabal of NGOs as proxies to coerce and pressure social media companies to censor Americans through both (1) targeted takedowns of specific statements, and (2) broader algorithmic censorship to artificially suppress speech the Biden administration and their NGO allies disfavored.<sup>8</sup> By working with these NGOs as cut-outs, the State Department helped fund and build a vast censorship enterprise carefully crafted to censor Americans’ speech while simultaneously evading constitutional scrutiny.<sup>9</sup>

To ensure our government would no longer censor our fellow Americans, I successfully fought to defund the State Department’s censorship apparatus and shutter the Global Engagement Center.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See, e.g., Secretary of State Marco Rubio (@SecRubio), X.COM (July 18, 2025, 7:21 PM), <https://x.com/SecRubio/status/1946349695221043669>.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Efrat Lachter, *State Department reportedly orders visa denials tied to speech censorship as Trump team slams Europe*, FOX NEWS (Dec. 8, 2025), <https://www.foxnews.com/world/state-department-reportedly-orders-visa-denials-tied-speech-censorship-trump-team-slams-europe>.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Press Statement, “Sanctioning Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes for Serious Human Rights Abuse,” U.S. Dep’t of State (July 30, 2025).

<sup>6</sup> See generally *Missouri v. Biden*, 680 F. Supp. 3d 630 (W.D. La. 2023); see also *The Censorship Industrial Complex: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on the Constitution* (March 25, 2025), <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/committee-activity/hearings/the-censorship-industrial-complex>.

<sup>7</sup> *Missouri*, 680 F. Supp. 3d at 704.

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., *id.* at 705 (“In partnership with these [NGOs] the State Department Defendants flagged and reported postings of protected free speech to the social-media companies for suppression.”).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* (explaining the State Department partnered with NGOs to “‘get around’ First Amendment issues” while “associate[ing], collaborat[ing], and partner[ing] with these organizations...to suppress protected free speech of American citizens”; *Murthy v. Missouri*, 603 U.S. 43, 79 (2024) (Alito, J., dissenting) (arguing that holding censorship victims did not have standing to sue because the governmental actors like the State Department used NGO cut-outs to facilitate the censorship provides “an attractive model for future officials who want to control what the people say, hear, and think”).

<sup>10</sup> Letter from Sen. Eric Schmitt to Sen. Charles Schumer, Senate Majority Leader (Dec. 19, 2024), available at: <https://x.com/SenEricSchmitt/status/1869799875149476182?s=20>; Victor Nava, *State Department’s Global Engagement Center—accused of pushing censorship to combat online ‘disinformation’—shuts down*, N.Y. POST (Dec. 26, 2024), <https://nypost.com/2024/12/26/us-news/state-departments-global-engagement-center-accused-of-pushing-censorship-to-combat-online-disinformation-shuts-down/>.

Since President Trump returned to the White House, Secretary Rubio and the State Department have taken decisive action to systematically dismantle the US censorship-industrial complex.<sup>11</sup> But just as the Biden administration’s “subtle and sophisticated” censorship regime<sup>12</sup>—which one federal judge likened to an Orwellian Ministry of Truth<sup>13</sup>—began to end, countries around the globe took up the mantle by codifying and strengthening their own censorship regimes.

Building on the Global Engagement Center’s model, the European Union implemented the DSA, a law that imposes massive penalties on social media companies that refuse to censor speech disfavored by European bureaucrats.<sup>14</sup> And just like the Global Engagement Center pioneered, one of the key mechanisms the DSA uses to enable censorship is empowering EU-government approved NGOs to flag content for removal and adjudicate which speech—including American speech—should be censored.<sup>15</sup>

The United Kingdom’s Online Safety Act presents similar issues as the EU’s DSA.<sup>16</sup> Britain’s online speech regulator—the Office of Communications (Ofcom)—recently embarked on a campaign to enforce the Online Safety Act against Americans exercising their free speech rights here on American soil.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, this British censorship is unsurprising, as the State Department recently noted that the “human rights situation worsened in the United Kingdom” over the past year, in large part due to “serious restrictions on freedom of expression, including enforcement of or threat of criminal or civil laws in order to limit expression.”<sup>18</sup>

Australia too has attempted similar censorship against American citizens’ speech. For example, Australia’s eSafety Commissioner recently demanded X take negative action against certain posts from United States citizens on United States soil—and threatened X with daily fines if it did not comply.<sup>19</sup> This spate of censorship demands came after the eSafety Commissioner previously

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<sup>11</sup> See, e.g., Exec. Order No. 14149, 90 Fed. Reg. 8243 (2025); Marco Rubio, *Protecting and Championing Free Speech at the State Department*, U.S. DEP’T OF STATE (April 16, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/protecting-and-championing-free-speech-at-the-state-department>.

<sup>12</sup> *Murthy*, 603 U.S. at 99 (Alito, J., dissenting).

<sup>13</sup> See *Missouri*, 680 F. Supp. 3d at 729.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Dawn Carla Nunziato, *The Digital Services Act and the Brussels Effect on Platform Content Moderation*, 24 CHIC. J. INT. LAW 115 (2023) (“[T]he DSA’s substantive content moderation and notice and take down provisions will likely incentivize the platforms to remove large swaths of content.... And the platforms will likely alter their globally applicable terms of service and content moderation guidelines in response to the DSA’s mandates in ways that will be speech-restrictive worldwide.”).

<sup>15</sup> THE FOREIGN CENSORSHIP THREAT, *supra* note 1, at 18–37, 117 (explaining DSA relies on and empowers an army of NGOs to censor speech, including American speech).

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Dep’t of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 2024 COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES: UNITED KINGDOM, at 3 (explaining that the United Kingdom’s Online Safety Act of 2023 expanded British regulators’ authorities to target “online harm” from United States social media companies).

<sup>17</sup> E.g., Ashley Belanger, *4chan fined \$26k for refusing to assess risks under UK Online Safety Act*, ARSTECHNICA (Oct. 13, 2025), <https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2025/10/4chan-fined-26k-for-refusing-to-assess-risks-under-uk-online-safety-act/>.

<sup>18</sup> U.S. Dep’t of State, *supra* note 16, at 1–5 (detailing the deteriorating state of free expression in the UK).

<sup>19</sup> Press Release, “eSafety statement: removal notices target illegal online material,” Australian Government eSafety Commissioner (Oct. 7, 2025), <https://www.esafety.gov.au/newsroom/media-releases/esafety-statement-removal-notices-target-illegal-online-material>; Cindy Harper, *Australia Threatens X With Daily Fines Over Iryna Zarutskya*

issued global takedown orders demanding X and Meta censor videos proving an attack on a Christian church was an Islamic terrorist attack.<sup>20</sup>

Brazil has also tried to censor speech originating in the United States. For example, Brazil has issued global takedown orders against online speech from users on US soil.<sup>21</sup>

In light of these recent foreign censorship attempts against Americans, I was pleased to see the State Department's recent decision to impose visa restrictions and sanctions against the Brazilian officials responsible for this censorship.<sup>22</sup> Those visa restrictions and sanctions sent an important message to the world that the United States will not stand idly by while foreign governments try to extraterritorially suppress our citizens' right to free speech and censor the information we can see. Those actions were a welcome first step. But we need to do more.

Three tools the State Department should consider using to combat foreign censorship are the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act,<sup>23</sup> as implemented by Executive Order 13818,<sup>24</sup> and Sections 212(a)(3)(C)<sup>25</sup> and 212(f)<sup>26</sup> of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).

The Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and EO 13818 provide powerful tools to punish and deter the global censorship-industrial complex that menaces the freedoms of Americans. Those authorities permit the Secretary of State to sanction human rights abusers by freezing their US assets, prohibiting all transactions with them, and blocking their travel to the US.<sup>27</sup> Sanctioning the global censorship-industrial complex would not only send an important diplomatic message that the United States will not tolerate foreign censorship but also forcefully deter and punish all the foreign individuals and entities who seek to impose it.

For the past decade, the State Department has used Magnitsky-EO 13818 sanctions under administrations from both parties against foreigners in far-flung countries who attack the freedom

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*Attack Video*, RECLAIMTHENET (Oct. 5, 2025), <https://reclaimthenet.org/australia-threatens-x-fines-over-zarutskavideo>.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Didi Rankovic, *Bishop Makes Bold Stand Against Censorship in the Wake of Wakely Church Stabbing*, RECLAIMTHENET (Apr. 30, 2024), <https://reclaimthenet.org/bishop-mar-mari-emmanuel-returns>; Ashley Belanger, *Elon Musk's X defeats Australia's global takedown order of stabbing video*, ARSTECHNICA (June 5, 2024), <https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2024/06/elon-musk-wins-fight-with-australian-safety-regulator-over-stabbing-video-on-x/>.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Alexander, *US Faces Global Free Speech Showdown with Brazil*, NEWSWEEK (Sep. 16, 2025), <https://www.newsweek.com/us-free-speech-showdown-brazil-2130732>.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Secretary of State Marco Rubio (@SecRubio), X.COM (July 18, 2025, 7:21 PM), <https://x.com/SecRubio/status/1946349695221043669> (announcing visa restrictions against Brazilian officials who created a “complex so sweeping that it not only violates basic rights of Brazilians, but also extends beyond Brazil's shores to target Americans”).

<sup>23</sup> *Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act*, Pub. L. No. 114-328, tit. XII, subtitle F, 130 Stat. 2533 (2016).

<sup>24</sup> Exec. Order 13818, 82 Fed. Reg. 60839 (Dec. 20, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> 8 U.S.C. § 1182(a)(3)(C) (“An alien whose entry or proposed activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable ground to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States is inadmissible.”)

<sup>26</sup> 8 U.S.C. § 1182(f) (permitting the President to “suspend the entry of all aliens” that the President finds “would be detrimental to the interests of the United States”).

<sup>27</sup> See Exec. Order 13818, 82 Fed. Reg. at 60839–42.

of expression of their fellow countrymen.<sup>28</sup> Now, however, we face a situation in which the targets in question are waging a direct assault on the liberties of not only their citizens but also our own citizens, right here on our own soil. That fact makes the case for sanctions all the more urgent. The fundamental principle of America First demands that we protect our citizens' fundamental rights from the threats they face from abroad.

The State Department should also consider imposing visa and travel restrictions against this global censorship regime's apparatchiks. For example, leading foreign censors—including EU-DSA regulators, the Australian eSafety Commissioner, Brazilian officials, and representatives from the UK's Ofcom—recently participated in a confab at Stanford University's Cyber Policy Center to “to discuss the state of compliance and enforcement” with “multi-jurisdictional regulations.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, they travelled to the United States to discuss how to force social media companies to censor Americans. It is well-established that the federal government has the power to block the entry of individuals who seek to undermine the foundations of our society.<sup>30</sup> Going forward, the State Department should consider blocking visas for similar conferences on US soil under Sections 212(a)(3)(C) and 212(f) of the INA.<sup>31</sup> There is no reason to facilitate foreign censorship of US citizens by granting these would-be tyrants entry into our country for coordination meetings.

I also encourage the State Department to consider revoking the visas of foreign censors, such as Imran Ahmed, who is reportedly here on a visa.<sup>32</sup> Ahmed is the former British Labour Party operative who founded the George Soros-funded censorship organization Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH).<sup>33</sup> Ahmed and CCDH have been involved in both the Biden administration's censorship regime and the burgeoning global censorship-industrial complex.<sup>34</sup> For example, he

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<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., Press Statement, “Sanctioning Brazilian Supreme Court Justice Alexandre de Moraes for Serious Human Rights Abuse,” U.S. Dep’t of State (July 30, 2025), <https://www.state.gov/releases/office-of-the-spokesperson/2025/07/sanctioning-brazilian-supreme-court-justice-alexandre-de-moraes-for-serious-human-rights-abuse> (Trump administration sanctioning individual for, amongst other reasons, “violations of the freedom of expression”); U.S. Dep’t of State, *Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Annual Report*, 89 Fed. Reg. 13795, 13799 (Feb. 23, 2024) (Biden administration sanctioning individual for violating “right to freedom of expression”); U.S. Dep’t of State, *Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Annual Report*, 90 Fed. Reg. 12921, 12922 (Mar. 29, 2025) (Biden administration sanctioning three individuals, including non-governmental actors, for “undermining fundamental freedoms” like the “freedom of expression”); see also Exec. Order. 13818 at §§ 1, 6 (permitting sanctions against foreign entities).

<sup>29</sup> *Stanford’s Cyber Policy Center Coordinates International Internet Censorship*, STANFORD REVIEW (Oct. 29, 2025), <https://stanfordreview.org/breaking-stanfords-cyber-policy-center-coordinates-international-internet-censorship/>; Stanford Cyber Policy Center, *Compliance and Enforcement in a Rapidly Evolving Landscape* (Sep. 24, 2025), available at: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IhhjHBNxUESW8k79pt9wIwH\\_kr8ETnO7/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1IhhjHBNxUESW8k79pt9wIwH_kr8ETnO7/view?usp=sharing).

<sup>30</sup> E.g., *Kleindienst v. Mandel*, 408 U.S. 753, 765–70 (1972) (upholding exclusion of avowed communist from US).

<sup>31</sup> See *supra* notes 25 and 26 and accompanying text.

<sup>32</sup> Connor Stringer, *Trump to deport boss of Starmer-linked charity*, TELEGRAPH (Nov. 9, 2025), <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/us/news/2025/11/09/trump-to-expel-boss-of-labour-linked-ngo/>.

<sup>33</sup> Chuck Ross, *George Soros Gave \$250K to British Group Working To Censor Conservative News Sites and ‘Kill Musk’s Twitter’*, WASHINGTON FREE BEACON (Nov. 17, 2025), <https://freebeacon.com/democrats/exclusive-george-soros-gave-250k-to-british-group-working-to-censor-conservative-news-sites-and-kill-musks-twitter/>.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

and CCDH worked to censor US media outlets, encouraged the Biden administration to censor Americans, and promised to “kill” X because of its support for free speech.<sup>35</sup> Given the United States’s recent diplomatic efforts to combat global censorship and promote the freedom of speech and expression around the world, the continued presence of foreign censors like Ahmed in the country is detrimental to the United States and would have adverse consequences for its foreign policy.<sup>36</sup> The State Department should consider revoking his visa and the visas of similar malign foreign actors.

The American people will not abide this brazen foreign censorship. Our Constitution and laws prohibit it. If the United States is to protect the freedoms that form the beating heart of our way of life, then we must fight back and prevent foreign governments from violating our sovereignty and eviscerating our freedom of speech by imposing their censorship laws on our citizens on our own soil.

I look forward to working with you to protect Americans’ free speech against foreign censorship. To that end, I request your response to the following questions to help inform my legislative process:

1. Does the State Department have the statutory tools it needs to combat this foreign censorship threat, or are additional authorities needed?
2. Are any additional legislative solutions needed to help the United States combat the global censorship-industrial complex’s threat to American free speech and sovereignty?

Sincerely,



Eric S. Schmitt  
United States Senator

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<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *See* 8 U.S.C. §§ 1182(a)(3)(C), (f).