

# CHOKEHOLD

Donald Trump's War on Free Speech  
& the Need for Systemic Resistance



Written by Nora Benavidez  
Free Press  
December 2025

# CONTENTS

<b>I. INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II. THE TRUMP CENSORSHIP PLAYBOOK .....</b>	<b>6</b>
A. BIG LIES .....	6
B. SOWING CHAOS TO DISTRACT THE PUBLIC AND DISTORT REALITY .....	7
C. SEATING A BENCH OF HENCHMEN .....	8
<b>III. NO ONE IS SAFE FROM TRUMP’S QUEST TO         CONTROL THE MESSAGE .....</b>	<b>10</b>
A. THE PRESS GET PUMMELED .....	10
B. A CHILL OVER PROTESTERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY .....	11
C. IMMIGRANTS AS TEST SUBJECTS TO ROLL BACK FREEDOM .....	13
D. PUBLIC SERVANTS UNDER FIRE FOR DISAGREEING WITH TRUMP .....	15
E. ACADEMIC FREEDOM AT RISK .....	15
F. LAW FIRMS AND JUDGES ABUSED FOR UPHOLDING THE LAW .....	16
G. CORPORATE MEDIA AND TECH CRUMBLE .....	17
<b>IV. THE METHODS OF ATTACK .....</b>	<b>18</b>
A. MAKING THREATS OF RETRIBUTION AGAINST WOULD-BE OPPONENTS .....	18
B. EMBOLDENING REGULATORS TO EXACT PENALTIES .....	18
C. SUPERCHARGING THE MILITARIZED POLICE STATE .....	19
D. LEVERAGING HEAVYWEIGHT CORPORATE CAPITULATION .....	20
E. IGNORING FACTS, REMOVING INFORMATION, REWRITING HISTORY, LYING ON THE RECORD .....	20
F. CHARTING THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF ATTACKS ON FREE SPEECH .....	21
<b>V. DESPITE LEGAL LOSSES, THE GOVERNMENT’S         CENSORSHIP CAMPAIGN IS UNPRECEDENTED IN         U.S. HISTORY .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>VI. THE PEOPLE’S PLAYBOOK: COORDINATED,         SYSTEMIC RESISTANCE TO BLUNT TRUMP’S TYRANNY .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>VII. RECOMMENDATIONS: PRINCIPLE OVER POWER .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>VIII. METHODOLOGY &amp; ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>IX. APPENDIX: TIMELINE OF ATTACKS ON THE         FIRST AMENDMENT .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>X. ENDNOTES .....</b>	<b>46</b>

**“WE TOOK THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH AWAY.”<sup>1</sup>**

*—President Trump in opening remarks at his “antifa roundtable”  
(October 2025)*

# Introduction

**This Free Press report examines the Trump administration's hostile relationship with dissent and free expression in 2025. It analyzes how President Trump and his political enablers have worked to undermine and chill the most basic freedoms protected under the First Amendment. While the U.S. government has made efforts throughout this nation's history to censor people's expression and association<sup>2</sup> — be it the exercise of freedom of speech, religion, press, assembly, or the right to petition the government for redress — the Trump administration's incessant attacks on even the most tentatively oppositional speech are uniquely aggressive, pervasive and escalating.**

Attacks on dissent have unfolded as a daily barrage of headlines. These come in countless forms: violent physical attacks on reporters covering protests against ICE, law enforcement targeting and detaining foreign students for months due to their political speech, the White House firing and the Justice Department prosecuting government servants who refuse to comply with Trump's personal vendettas. While each attack is noteworthy and often an unprecedented show of censorship, the sheer volume of chilling attacks has helped ensure that even the most egregious assaults quickly fall out of the news cycle and public consciousness.

The administration's censorial tactics are amassing tremendous resistance across political and geographic lines, with a majority of people worried about the government's attacks on free speech.<sup>3</sup> Anti-democratic figures in and around the White House face growing public opposition to their authoritarian campaign and are doubling down to muzzle criticism, suppress dissenting voices and weaken scrutiny of their own legally questionable defiance of constitutional safeguards. And despite

Trump's claims that he's protecting people and defending free speech, his aggressive attacks on dissent say otherwise.<sup>4</sup>

To create this report, Free Press examined original reporting on more than 500 actions — including verbal threats, arrests, lawsuits, regulatory actions and military deployments — by Trump, the Trump White House, Trump-appointed federal regulators, the National Guard, law-enforcement agencies and other branches of government. We focus exclusively on federal actions that implicate the First Amendment, with such examples becoming nearly all-encompassing as Trump seeks to silence dissent. We reviewed commentary and interviewed constitutional lawyers, civil-society leaders and historians. We have catalogued nearly 200 of the most potent examples of the federal government's attacks on the First Amendment in our *[Timeline of Attacks](#)*.

We have observed related anti-democratic attacks at the federal level as well as state and local actions that compound the Trump administration's efforts to undermine broad democratic principles. Each threat scenario deserves rigorous scrutiny in its own right. Due to the overwhelming volume of threats to and attacks on the First Amendment since Trump took office, this report captures and reveals the repeating patterns of censorship and analyzes the *hallmarks* of this administration's censorial campaign.<sup>5</sup>

## Free Press identifies five key findings:

- ▶ **Trump's tyrannical playbook has infected the entire administration with an ethos of retaliation, targeting free speech that contradicts him:**<sup>6</sup> At the most fundamental level, Trump obsesses over his image and routinely lies to protect it. He sows chaos to distort reality and confuse the public. In his quest to control the message, Trump has installed a bench of loyalists to do his bidding at once-independent agencies. These sycophants — like Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr, Attorney General Pam Bondi, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Secretary of State Marco Rubio — are all too willing to translate his threats against perceived critics into penalties.
- ▶ **No one is safe from attack in Trump's quest to control the message, though the administration targets the press most of all:** We identified six sectors subject to consistent attacks from the Trump administration: the media; civil society; government workers and institutions; academia; the legal and judicial sector; and the corporate sector. Although Trump's censorship regime has targeted nearly every part of society, the media have been subject to physical, presidential, regulatory and law-enforcement attacks at a scale and pace no other sector has experienced.
- ▶ **The modes of attack are erratic, but they are also extensive and relentless:** We identify five recurring methods the Trump administration employs to undermine free expression and dissent:
  - I. Making Threats of Retribution Against Would-Be Opponents
  - II. Emboldening Regulators to Exact Penalties
  - III. Supercharging the Militarized Police State
  - IV. Leveraging Heavyweight Corporate Capitulation
  - V. Ignoring Facts, Removing Information, Rewriting History, Lying on the Record
- ▶ **While this chilling campaign is vastly unpopular and often loses in court, its speed and scale are unprecedented in U.S. history:** Just shy of a year into the presidential term, the White House has undermined free speech using myriad actions and threats. The attacks largely fail judicial scrutiny and have roused significant and wide-ranging public opposition. Yet the administration continues to actively disregard existing law, violate court orders it dislikes and lie in official proceedings to concoct arguments that support Trump's censorship agenda. The government's assault on core First Amendment principles is an active, protean threat that's symptomatic of broader democratic erosion.
- ▶ **Collective resistance has blunted Trump's censorship campaign and must be sustained.** Coordinated resistance has proven successful at blunting the potency of Trump's censorship campaign, mirroring the power collective resistance has had throughout modern U.S. history to move society forward. While the United States is sliding into authoritarianism, we still have relatively free and fair elections, a largely independent press, and the ability for millions of people to show up in the streets to protest. Sustained and systemic resistance will be essential in the months and years ahead as a bulwark against tyranny.

Together, these findings show that an undeniable, repressive movement is underway. A cabal of those with the most power and wealth in the United States is helping the administration place a chokehold on dissenting voices. The net effect is to weaken scrutiny that might otherwise prevent legally questionable and blatantly unconstitutional acts.

This report lays out recommendations to reverse the resulting democratic backsliding and repair broken constitutional promises for public engagement, advance a framework for informational and societal health, and prioritize people over profits. Such solutions are essential to safeguarding all of our democratic freedoms, including our core First Amendment rights.

## II.

# The Trump Censorship Playbook

**Trump's playbook is responsible for the administration's central retaliatory ethos and inspires a set of strategies that a range of loyalist actors use to silence dissent and chill free expression. This playbook is to lie, distort reality for the public and deploy a cadre of henchmen to carry out Trump's threats of reprisal.**

---

### A. BIG LIES

As journalist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa says: "If you want to rip the heart out of a democracy, you go after the facts."<sup>7</sup>

At the most fundamental level, Trump has consistently leveraged lies to distort reality, burnish his own image and evade accountability.<sup>8</sup> Trump's penchant for lies — his inability to *not* lie — defines his leadership style and has guided the political henchmen doing much of his censorial bidding, normalizing false statements and showing disregard for reality or facts. Trump deliberately misleads people; in 2019, during his first term, he instructed his White House press secretary to use his method of lying: "As long as you keep repeating something, it doesn't matter what you say."<sup>9</sup>

The *Washington Post* kept count of the lies Trump told during his first presidential term.<sup>10</sup> The outlet's final tally was a staggering 30,573 — an average of 21 lies or misleading statements every day Trump was in office.<sup>11</sup>

Trump's most notable and harmful lie during his first term was his claim that the 2020 election was stolen from him.<sup>12</sup> He began seeding those false claims even before that election took place, sowing fears that voter fraud was rampant and falsely claiming that Democrats hid ballots, trashed ballots and even found dead voters to impersonate on ballots. As Republicans and Democrats alike

repeatedly verified the 2020 election results in the days, months and years after the election, Trump only dug in further.<sup>13</sup>

As a result, that lie had calamitous consequences. On Jan. 6, 2021, hundreds of Trump supporters, rallied by far-right activists and Trump himself, broke into the halls of Congress, with the goal of finding and destroying the elector ballots verifying the 2020 results.<sup>14</sup> Social-media platforms have since walked back policies on election misinformation and have amplified the Big Lie.<sup>15</sup> State election boards continue to pass new rules to address unfounded claims about voter fraud.<sup>16</sup> And state legislative committees keep citing the allegedly stolen election as a pretext for introducing often unconstitutional legislation.<sup>17</sup>

Trump's lies, big and small, from the seemingly existential to the banal, have brought untold damage to communities and often serve as the pretext to usher in more aggressive MAGA policy stances. For example, two months before the 2024 election Trump's racist lies about Haitian immigrants eating dogs earned the dubious distinction of being PolitiFact's "Lie of the Year" — and powerful figures like then-Vice Presidential nominee J.D. Vance and House Speaker Mike Johnson repeated this hateful claim, enabling it to gain further traction.<sup>18</sup> This lie has also helped galvanize his supporters to broadly accept the administration's pervasive attacks on immigrants of color.

Trump lies so often that even the list of examples is too exhaustive: The Wikipedia page for "False or misleading statements by Donald Trump" featured a banner as recently as Oct. 28, 2025, that claimed: "It has been suggested that this article be split out into articles titled False or misleading statements by Donald Trump (first term), False or misleading statements by Donald Trump (between terms) and False or misleading statements by Donald Trump (second term). (Discuss) (October 2025)". Another banner below explained "This article may be too long to read and navigate comfortably. Consider splitting content into sub-



articles, condensing it, or adding subheadings.” This banner was later removed from the Wikipedia page.<sup>19</sup>

## B. SOWING CHAOS TO DISTRACT THE PUBLIC AND DISTORT REALITY

Ally and former Trump advisor Steve Bannon once explained that Trump’s media strategy is to “flood the zone with shit.”<sup>20</sup> This chaos-inducing tactic remains a mainstay in Trump’s second term and complements Trump’s relentless lying.<sup>21</sup>

Trump’s lies amass in cumulative and compounding ways. The resulting chaos overwhelms the public, distracts the media and undermines democratic progress. As writer Rebecca Solnit noted: “The Trump administration hides its atrocities behind its atrocities, its obscenities behind its obscenities, its corruptions behind its corruptions. The ones this week distract us from the ones last week.”<sup>22</sup>

We’re too busy analyzing, digesting and responding to yesterday’s bevy of attacks to take in and respond to today’s. And so on. The result is a distracted public and media, which Trump leverages to commit further attacks that undermine core constitutional principles.

On the first day of his second term, Trump signed a flurry of executive orders. The volume of orders on day one alone was so great that even the most



President Trump signed 26 executive orders on his first day in office this term. During the first 100 days of his second term, he signed 143 executive orders (an average of over one per day) — more than any other president had signed during their first 100 days in office. As of Dec. 2, 2025, he has signed 216 executive orders. By comparison, during his first term, he signed 220 executive orders total. Source: The White House

egregious and distorted language in some of these pronouncements inevitably got lost among the cacophony of reporting.

While chaos-inducing in number, these orders also clearly sought to undermine free expression. As a matter of law, these orders carry little more weight than press releases, but the intent was clear: to control the behavior and speech of companies and other non-governmental actors. Each of these orders advances distortions of constitutional frameworks.<sup>23</sup> Throughout January, this pattern became even more notable as every executive order and memorandum implicating expression turned foundational First Amendment principles on their heads.

**“ THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HIDES ITS ATROCITIES BEHIND ITS ATROCITIES, ITS OBSCENITIES BEHIND ITS OBSCENITIES, ITS CORRUPTIONS BEHIND ITS CORRUPTIONS. THE ONES THIS WEEK DISTRACT US FROM THE ONES LAST WEEK.”**

—Rebecca Solnit

In January alone, Trump issued executive orders to the effect of:

- a. **“Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship.”**<sup>24</sup> The White House subverted First Amendment principles, casting prior public-health and election-integrity efforts as “federal censorship.” The order also issued a directive to “restore freedom of speech” by constraining government interactions with social-media platforms and civil society on mis/disinformation. The order also urged the attorney general to investigate the Biden administration’s actions in the context of free speech, and to seek remedial actions — leaving those responses vague.
- b. **“Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid.”**<sup>25</sup> The White House froze funding for programs run by the U.S. Agency for

International Development (USAID), including programs designed to empower civil-society organizations, human-rights groups, journalists and others responding to digital repression and internet shutdowns. This paved the way later in the year for the White House to fire more than 1,000 Voice of America staff. While doing so, Trump repeated false claims about the outlet being “leftist” “propaganda” — and referred to it as “The Voice of Radical America.”<sup>26</sup>

- c. **“Additional Measure to Combat Antisemitism.”**<sup>27</sup> The White House outlined a broad crackdown on what Trump called “the explosion of antisemitism” on U.S. college campuses. The order falsely claimed that foreign students who are lawfully in the United States on visas do not enjoy the same free-speech or due-process rights as citizens. This was the political and legal origin of later attacks from the Department of Homeland Security, State Department and other agencies targeting foreign students for pro-Palestinian political speech, going after foreign journalists and justifying increased surveillance of people’s on- and offline speech.<sup>28</sup>

## C. SEATING A BENCH OF HENCHMEN

Authoritarian leaders typically surround themselves with yes-men and -women, loyal lieutenants willing to do a leader’s bidding without question. Trump has assembled such apparatchiks as Vice President J.D. Vance, Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, Deputy Chief of Staff and Homeland Security Advisor Stephen Miller, Attorney General Pam Bondi, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, FBI Director Kash Patel, Office of Management and Budget Director Russell Vought and Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem to indulge his whims and act on his threats. What begins as a verbal assault from Trump often quickly leads to concrete reprisals.

**Consider this:** Over the course of just four weeks in the fall of 2025, Trump’s henchmen assaulted the First Amendment in the following ways:

1. The Pentagon told reporters they “must sign a pledge not to gather any information, including unclassified reports, that hasn’t been authorized for release.”<sup>29</sup>
2. The Department of Homeland Security proposed visa-rule changes to limit the period foreign journalists (and students) could stay in the country.<sup>30</sup>



The menagerie of loyalists surrounding Trump who do his censorial bidding, often turning his threats against would-be opponents into chilling penalties. Sources: Original images by U.S. Embassy Jerusalem & Wikimedia Commons user Gage Skidmore



3. FCC Chairman Brendan Carr told ABC that “we can do this the easy way or the hard way,” pressuring the network to remove Jimmy Kimmel from the air after the late-night host commented on the GOP response to Charlie Kirk’s assassination.<sup>31</sup>
4. The National Park Service began removing images of slavery and tribal nations from federally run museums and national parks because Trump feels such images present U.S. history too negatively and “inappropriately disparage Americans”.<sup>32</sup>
5. The Department of Education — inspired by Trump’s executive order in January — pressured universities for the names of allegedly antisemitic faculty as part of its wider effort to restrict academic freedom on campuses.<sup>33</sup>
6. The Department of Justice scrubbed from its website a study that found far-right domestic terrorists have killed more people in the United States than any other group since 1990.<sup>34</sup>
7. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, a branch of the Department of Homeland Security, threatened to bring federal charges against anyone who “assaults an officer” for constitutionally protected activities such as public assembly.<sup>35</sup>
8. Vice President J.D. Vance threatened to classify people who critique Charlie Kirk as terrorists.<sup>36</sup>

In most of these instances, Trump himself made verbal threats that shaped the escalating action his henchmen took. This censorial doom loop allows a would-be authoritarian like Trump to make passing comments a chilling policy reality.

Together, the array of strategies in Trump’s playbook — lies Trump himself spews, the chaos he induces to distort reality, and the henchmen around him that do his bidding — has created a powerful and coordinated executive machine to target dissent.

---

### III.

## No One Is Safe From Trump's Quest to Control the Message

**Under this administration, no one is safe from attack for exercising their free-speech rights. As Will Creeley of the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) explained: “Your right to say something depends on what the administration thinks of it, which is no free speech at all.”<sup>37</sup>**

Trump is always seeking to control the message — and goes after speech that contradicts his version of reality. He does so in extreme ways, leading to the most aggressive attacks on free speech in modern U.S. history.<sup>38</sup> Those caught in the crosshairs have largely been journalists, protesters and public servants who disagree with Trump. He's subjected the media industry in particular to relentless abuse.<sup>39</sup>

The Trump administration has also systematically gone after civil-society and nonprofit organizations; government institutions and public servants; universities, including faculty and students; the legal and judicial sector; and the corporate sector.

### A. THE PRESS GET PUMMELED

Attacking media independence is page one of the authoritarian playbook.<sup>40</sup> Whether through outright repression of dissenting voices or more insidious forms of co-optation and expropriation of media institutions, constraining journalists allows would-be authoritarians to act with relative impunity — and with less public awareness of their abuses. Trump himself is escalating his attacks on the media, making his 2017 claims that the media “is the enemy of the people” seem almost quaint.<sup>41</sup> In his second term, Trump has threatened individual reporters, telling domestic journalists that he will report them to the Department of Justice and foreign journalists that he'll report them to

their home governments.<sup>42</sup> Trump has cut off wire-service access to the White House. He has sued news outlets, alleging millions of dollars in damages for their editorial decisions. He has leveraged the FCC to bully broadcast networks, notably including pressures to take Jimmy Kimmel off the air.<sup>43</sup> He's sicced the FCC into threatening investigations into NPR and PBS for their “biased” coverage, ultimately inspiring Congress to defund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. This has led public-media stations around the country to lay off staff, reduce programming — and, in some cases, announce plans to shut down.<sup>44</sup> And the White House has launched a “media bias” tracker on its official website with the supposed purpose of monitoring fake news; in reality, the tracker serves as a hit-list of outlets and reporters covering Trump in ways he seeks to muzzle.<sup>45</sup>

The attacks on the press aren't just coming from Trump and his henchmen regulators. Federal law enforcement has consistently attacked journalists covering protests in 2025. When protests broke out in opposition to ICE tactics in Los Angeles in June, law enforcement targeted reporters on the ground, shooting them with teargas, rubber bullets and pepper balls. And during the June No Kings rally in Atlanta, local police targeted Mario Guevara, an immigrant journalist who was streaming law



Law enforcement in Los Angeles shot journalist Lauren Tomasi with a rubber bullet. Videos of this encounter show that law enforcement observed Tomasi engaging in constitutionally protected journalistic activity and shot her despite knowing she was a reporter doing her job. Sources: CBS News & 9 News Australia

enforcement. His work as a journalist ultimately led to the administration deporting him to El Salvador, where he previously faced dangerous attacks.<sup>46</sup> In Chicago, a group of local-news organizations has sued DHS Secretary Kristi Noem for violating their reporters' First Amendment rights.<sup>47</sup>

Along with these overt repressive efforts, corporate media executives have largely capitulated to Trump's pressures — both to avoid penalty and to curry their own favor.<sup>48</sup> CBS parent company Paramount settled a lawsuit with Trump for airing an October 2024 interview with then-Vice President Kamala Harris, which Trump claimed *60 Minutes* had deceptively edited.<sup>49</sup> (But hypocrisy abounds: Just this November, CBS aired another *60 Minutes* interview, this time with Trump, which the network edited heavily to create a more favorable impression of the president.)<sup>50</sup> ABC parent company Disney, Sinclair and Nexstar all succumbed to the Trump FCC's pressures to remove Jimmy Kimmel from the air in September.<sup>51</sup>

Brutalization of the press is common in anti-democratic regimes like Georgia, Serbia and Turkey.<sup>52</sup> Here, the totality of attacks is coming from all sides. This is eroding reporters' editorial autonomy, undermining journalists' physical safety and weakening the Fourth Estate at a time when the public needs trustworthy information about what the administration is doing more than ever.

---

## B. A CHILL OVER PROTESTERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The administration is constantly attacking civil society. Those targeted encompass a wide array of actors — from protesters to nonprofits and foundations — that form a strong, visible base for pro-democracy efforts.

Trump's response to organized protests has included sending the National Guard to numerous states that opposed these mobilizations. National Guardsmen have violated the First and Fourth Amendment rights of activists on the ground, assaulting and arresting people who had peaceably assembled.<sup>53</sup> Such treatment violates



Militarized and masked agents deployed in Los Angeles in June.  
Source: Susana Canales Barrón, CALÓ News

protesters' basic First Amendment rights and the rights of reporters to cover events as they unfold. As these violent crackdowns occur, Trump's lies and exaggerations about protesters have further emboldened police to crack down on dissent and cover up their own escalating violence with lies.<sup>54</sup> Police and federal agents have ignored court orders and instigated violence to legitimize arrests.<sup>55</sup> And, as one Chicago district court judge noted in November, while people are continuing to protest, there is nonetheless a broader chilling effect on activism seeking to hold the administration accountable.<sup>56</sup> The intimidating mass of masked law enforcement deployed across cities leaves a chill over the most basic collective right we have to assemble together in public.

### THE INTIMIDATING MASS OF MASKED LAW ENFORCEMENT DEPLOYED ACROSS CITIES LEAVES A CHILL OVER THE MOST BASIC COLLECTIVE RIGHT WE HAVE TO ASSEMBLE TOGETHER IN PUBLIC.

More than ever before, prosecutions against protesters are happening at the federal level, with the Trump administration pretending that peaceful demonstrations merit a militarized response. This has created a credibility problem for prosecutors, who are increasingly facing skeptical juries and judges in cases where the facts don't appear to meet the legal thresholds Trump promotes of "violent" rioters.<sup>57</sup>



The Department of State has begun monitoring social-media accounts as a pretext to targeting immigrants, and ICE has begun using more sophisticated surveillance technology to monitor activists and immigrants.<sup>58</sup>

At the urging of Trump, Congress has introduced bills that would expand criminal definitions in a range of settings. One bill would strip nonprofits of their tax-exempt status based on their constitutionally protected speech.<sup>59</sup> Another bill would permit the death penalty for “ideologically motivated” violence.<sup>60</sup>

Meanwhile, the Department of Justice has initiated investigations into foundations and philanthropic organizations that support immigrants and pro-democracy work. The DoJ is invoking national security to justify its actions — claiming that civil-society groups that advocate for the free-speech

rights of protesters, immigrants and others are essentially supporting terrorism.<sup>61</sup> As with Trump’s campaigns against other sectors, these are tactics designed to intimidate organizations with the threat of costly, protracted legal battles that many civil-society organizations — unlike white-shoe law firms, corporate media conglomerates and Ivy League universities — simply cannot afford to take on.

The constant attacks on people’s free-speech rights — and on targeted communities around the country — risk chilling the speech of the independent institutions that help protect us all. The goal is to remove viewpoints that counter Trump’s lies.<sup>62</sup>



Chicago’s peaceful demonstrations, which the administration has recast as violent riots, prompted Trump to deploy National Guards to the city. This has led to a militarized crackdown on free speech and protest. Source: Courtney Morrison

## C. IMMIGRANTS AS TEST SUBJECTS TO ROLL BACK FREEDOM

The administration has used immigrants as test cases for rarely used or novel legal arguments that erode constitutional frameworks.<sup>63</sup> Immigrants are targeted for their expressive conduct despite having the same free-speech rights as U.S. citizens.<sup>64</sup>

Foreign reporters have been targeted for simply filming police, a long-held constitutionally protected activity under the First Amendment. In one of the most disturbing attacks, local police and ICE targeted one journalist, Mario Guevara, while he covered a No Kings rally in the Atlanta area in June. Guevara was held primarily in solitary confinement in rural southern Georgia for 111 days before he was deported to El Salvador. Throughout the legal process, the government repeatedly said in its pleadings that it targeted Guevara because of his journalistic activities covering ICE and law enforcement.<sup>65</sup> Additional immigrant journalists and livestreamers — including Sami Hamdi, Richard LA and Yaakub Vijandre — are being attacked across the country for their political reporting and for filming law enforcement.<sup>66</sup>



Journalist Mario Guevara. Source: Facebook page for Mario Guevara

There are many other cases where the administration is explicitly going after immigrants as test subjects. In March, graduate student Mahmoud Khalil was tossed into ICE custody during a warrantless arrest for protesting U.S.-supported Israeli attacks on Gaza.<sup>67</sup> Authorities have also targeted and detained foreign students — including Badar Khan Suri, Mohsen Madawi and Rümeyşa Öztürk — for their speech.<sup>68</sup>

In late 2025, a district court ruled that the Trump administration employed an unconstitutional policy by going after foreign students for their expressive conduct.<sup>69</sup> The district court explained: “This case ... squarely presents the issue of whether non-citizens lawfully present here in the United States actually have the same free speech rights as the rest of us [...] The Court answers this Constitutional question unequivocally ‘yes, they do.’” Judge William G. Young noted that “The intent of the Secretaries [of State and the Department of Homeland Security] was . . . to target a few for speaking out and then use the full rigor of the Immigration and Nationality Act (in ways it had never been used before) to have them publicly deported with the goal of tamping down pro-Palestinian student protests and terrorizing similarly situated non-citizen (and other) pro-Palestinians into silence because their views were unwelcome.”<sup>70</sup>



The administration targeted graduate student and activist Mahmoud Khalil for his political speech, arresting him in March and detaining for over three months. The federal government sought to apply novel legal arguments as precedent to deport naturalized citizens and other immigrants promoting human rights and engaging in protected protest activities. Sources: Original images by Office of Rep. Jim McGovern & Wikimedia Commons user SWinxy



Myriad examples illustrate this broader attack on immigrants: “Counterterrorism czar” Sebastian Gorka suggested that merely disagreeing with the forced deportation of unconvicted people to foreign prison cells is itself a punishable crime.<sup>71</sup> Meanwhile, the State Department has urged foreign students to self-deport after review of their social-media accounts showed political speech — which the First Amendment protects.<sup>72</sup> And Customs and Border Control has denied people entry to the United States for having content on their phones suggesting disagreement with the administration.<sup>73</sup>

The immigration system is a civil, not criminal, legal system — borne out of similarly chilling political circumstances to protect the United States from national-security threats during World War II and terrorism following the 9/11 attacks. But immigrants have faced continuous attacks throughout U.S. history. In the 1800s, anti-Catholic leaders spread lies claiming that Irish people were stealing Bibles. The 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act banned immigration from China until it was repealed in 1943. In the 1940s, Japanese Americans were interned in detention facilities at the behest of President Roosevelt for perceived disloyalty.

The scapegoating of immigrants has always had the intended effect of pushing communities to castigate and dehumanize specific groups of people. As we reach this fever point of chaos and hate, it seems almost natural that President Trump would demonize immigrants to justify policies that persecute them.



U.S. internment camps that housed Japanese Americans in the 1940s and a present-day detention center that houses Latinos and other immigrants. Sources: Mantat Kibernes & United States Department of Homeland Security

## D. PUBLIC SERVANTS UNDER FIRE FOR DISAGREEING WITH TRUMP

Early in the administration, the government moved quickly to purge from the federal workforce public servants who lacked obvious political loyalty to Trump. Through an executive order and then through a proposed Office of Personnel Management rule, the administration stated that failure to “faithfully implement administration policies” could be grounds for dismissal of even career employees.<sup>74</sup> The result stripped civil-service protections from policy-influencing roles, eroding rule-of-law guardrails and inviting viewpoint-based enforcement across agencies that interface with media, culture and the rule of law.<sup>75</sup>

**GOVERNMENT AGENCIES HAVE MUZZLED WORKERS’ SPEECH ONLINE AND WITH THE PRESS, FIRED WHISTLEBLOWERS AND TERMINATED OTHERS FOR REFUSING TO CAPITULATE TO TRUMP’S WISHES FOR REPRISAL.**

In the months that followed, politically motivated firings have grown to shocking numbers across a wide array of departments. Some offices have been removed altogether, such as the government watchdog Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, which oversaw 72 inspectors-general offices.<sup>76</sup> Trump has attacked high-profile public servants, current and former, when they’ve refused to bend the knee. Trump has made verbal threats against and pushed his henchmen to prosecute former National Security Adviser John Bolton, New York Attorney General Letitia James, former FBI Director James Comey, and a long list of other high-ranking officials he perceives as enemies.<sup>77</sup> Indictments and prosecutions have followed many of these threats.

Government agencies have muzzled workers’ speech online and with the press, fired whistleblowers and terminated others for refusing to capitulate to Trump’s wishes for reprisal.<sup>78</sup> The administration has distributed lists of words

that workers should purge from use<sup>79</sup> — and has simultaneously canceled official research and reporting for accountability purposes, defunding entire offices tasked with holding the administration accountable.<sup>80</sup> (See further analysis in *Methods of Attack: Ignoring Facts, Removing Information, Rewriting History, Lying on the Record.*)

Taken together, all of these actions remove dissenting views within the government and threaten workers who might otherwise exercise their free-speech rights.

## E. ACADEMIC FREEDOM AT RISK

Academic institutions cultivate critical thinking skills and expand research so that we can better understand the world and help people solve problems. These institutions must be free to openly explore and debate controversial issues. That academic freedom typically gives faculty the ability to teach freely on subjects of their own choosing without fear of either campus administrators or government officials trying to control their ideas.

But Trump, his Department of Education and Secretary of State Marco Rubio have threatened such academic freedom, sparking an alarming number of attacks on foreign students and academics.<sup>81</sup>

Trump established a “Task Force to Combat Antisemitism” — which never actually fought antisemitism but instead became a vehicle through which the administration pressured universities to adopt policies that align with the president’s desire to stifle campus protests and eliminate DEI programs.<sup>82</sup> The task force required major universities to submit or face sweeping funding cuts.

These pressures have been somewhat successful: In March, Columbia University caved to the administration after it withheld \$400 million in federal grants and contracts, agreeing to a bevy of policy changes related to student disciplinary processes, protest policies and admissions

procedures — all of which gave universities elsewhere the license to capitulate to Trump’s dictatorial grasp.

Columbia University also agreed to appoint a new senior vice provost to “conduct a thorough review” of its academic programs and centers related to various global topics, “starting immediately with the Middle East.” Other concessions included putting the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies into “academic receivership” and agreeing to conduct searches to expand “intellectual diversity among faculty.”<sup>83</sup>

Later in the fall, the administration offered a compact to nine universities — later extending it to all universities — that promised them priority funding in exchange for caving to the White House’s preferences about admissions, tuition, grading, student discipline, campus speech, protest rules, faculty hiring, staff hiring, athletics and many other domains.<sup>84</sup> Both the task force and the compact amount to a “devil’s bargain” that weakens academic freedom under the guise of potential financial support — or the withdrawal of federal funds.<sup>85</sup>

Meanwhile, agencies including Homeland Security and the State Department have targeted professors and detained students who protest in support of Palestinian rights, with Secretary of State Rubio vocally leading the charge. Rubio personally signed off on the arrest of Columbia University student Mahmoud Khalil.<sup>86</sup> [See box on **Immigrants as Test Subjects to Roll Back Freedom.**]



Rümeysa Öztürk, a Tufts graduate student from Turkey, was arrested on March 25, 2025, by masked Homeland Security agents in plain clothes. At the time of her arrest, Öztürk was in the United States on a valid F-1 student visa. The administration targeted her for her political speech, specifically for co-authoring an Op-Ed in *The Tufts Daily* that criticized the university’s response to campus protests over Israel’s war in Gaza. Sources: *The Tufts Daily*, Office of Rep. Ayanna Pressley and Wikimedia Commons user WholsCentreLeft

The resulting chill is palpable on campuses as universities are canceling events about censorship, students are reconsidering their travels abroad and faculty grow wary about teaching certain topics.<sup>87</sup>

---

## F. LAW FIRMS AND JUDGES ABUSED FOR UPHOLDING THE LAW

Law firms and judges form powerful bulwarks against lawless autocracy. They are agents of people’s most basic right to due process. And in 2025, they’ve become a favorite target of a Trump administration that sees control of legal procedures as part of its plan to avoid accountability for its actions.

The administration’s targeting of law firms seeks to limit a crucial safety net by stripping people of legal protections. In February, Trump began targeting law firms and lawyers who had supported litigation opposing Trump himself. The White House removed security clearances to federal courthouses for those who were targeted and Trump signed a bevy of executive orders seeking sanctions for lawyers who engage in “vexatious litigation against the United States” (i.e., lawyers representing people who petition the government for redress or otherwise pursue due process).<sup>88</sup>

Various rulings have largely upheld the expressive rights of law firms to represent a diverse set of views and clients. As a result, the judges issuing these rulings have also come under attack.<sup>89</sup> Trump has lobbed vicious verbal threats at judges, seeking to impeach the chief judge of the federal district court in Washington, D.C.<sup>90</sup> Deputy Chief of Staff and Homeland Security Advisor Stephen Miller verbally attacked an Oregon judge who blocked the president’s use of the military in Portland, calling the ruling “legal insurrection.”<sup>91</sup>

## G. CORPORATE MEDIA AND TECH CRUMBLE

The administration has similarly attacked corporate actors — though by and large, these institutions have capitulated and obeyed in advance.<sup>92</sup> The owners and CEOs of some of the country's largest corporate entities see currying favor with Trump as necessary to building their own wealth, and avoiding official scrutiny or punishment.<sup>93</sup>

During Trump's inauguration, billionaire tech tycoons lined up ahead of the president's own cabinet in a cowardly show of support for the incoming president. Such images illustrate how Trump's power is derived less from his narrow electoral win in 2024, and more from the endorsement of a cartel of billionaires — including Jeff Bezos, Larry Ellison, Rupert Murdoch, Elon Musk, Sundar Pichai and Mark Zuckerberg. These men exert so much power over the free-speech market — and are all too willing to manipulate their popular platforms to align with the White House's agenda.<sup>94</sup>

Many large media corporations have since caved to administration pressure to remove content or coverage Trump dislikes, or which paints him in a negative light.<sup>95</sup> Demonstrations of tech corporations' fealty to Trump have included million-dollar payments to bankroll the president's inauguration ceremonies, funds for his new White House ballroom and his future presidential library, and dubious legal settlements.<sup>96</sup>



The front row of President Trump's inauguration, lined with media and tech billionaires who have capitulated and collaborated with the administration since day one to build their empires and curry favor with the president. Source: TODAY



## IV.

# The Methods of Attack

**The Trump administration's tactics to suppress free speech are extensive and multifaceted. We identify five methods the Trump administration uses to repeatedly target free expression and undermine viewpoint diversity. These methods have been extensive and relentless. Columbia University Law Professor David Pozen explained: "The depth and breadth of this administration's disregard for civil liberties, political pluralism, the separation of powers and legal constraints of all kinds mark it as an authoritarian regime."<sup>97</sup>**

---

## A. MAKING THREATS OF RETRIBUTION AGAINST WOULD-BE OPPONENTS

The administration — and particularly the president himself — incessantly threatens people and institutions in hopes of pressuring them to submit to Trump's narrative and agenda.<sup>98</sup> Many of these threats come from Trump's Truth Social posts and remarks in person; others come from his henchmen, including Attorney General Pam Bondi, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, Deputy Chief of Staff and Homeland Security Advisor Stephen Miller, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, FBI Director Kash Patel, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Vice President J.D. Vance.

This menagerie of players form a force field around Trump, validating and boosting his ethos of retaliation and threatening any individual or group that questions the administration, assembles to express dissent, seeks to photograph or document law enforcement, or expresses their views in other constitutionally protected ways.

---

## B. EMBOLDENING REGULATORS TO EXACT PENALTIES

The Trump regime has worked to undermine regulatory-agency independence — and force agencies to do the administration's censorial bidding. Trump has also emboldened and encouraged loyalist-agency heads and other officials who are traditionally tasked with an array of roles to exact reprisals against Trump's perceived enemies and other dissenting voices.<sup>99</sup>

Many of the First Amendment attacks have come from highly placed figures within the Departments of Homeland Security, Interior, Justice, State and Treasury — and at once-independent agencies like the Federal Communications Commission and the Federal Trade Commission.<sup>100</sup>

Weakened independent agencies have translated Trump's threats into policy realities. Acting on Trump's executive order on combatting antisemitism on college campuses, the Department of Education's acting civil rights director sent letters to 60 educational institutions warning they could lose federal funding if they failed to do more to fight antisemitism.<sup>101</sup> Those threats led Columbia and other universities to capitulate to the administration. Months later, the Education Department told Harvard University that the administration had revoked its federal funding.<sup>102</sup> By July, the department had discontinued thousands of civil-rights investigations nationwide.<sup>103</sup> And in September, the administration told nine additional universities that they would have priority access to future funding if they agreed to implement certain conservative policy changes (Trump subsequently extended this offer to all higher-ed institutions).<sup>104</sup> All of this furthered Trump's efforts to control campus speech — and captured the Education Department's authority to make policy determinations.

Meanwhile, the Department of Homeland Security has furthered Trump's promised immigration crackdown.<sup>105</sup> Figures like DHS Secretary Kristi Noem are translating the ethos of Trump's



retaliatory agenda into policy reality: The Department is broadcasting hateful radio-station ads that urge people to self-deport and has bolstered authorities it has given itself to override and distort constitutional protections for civilians.<sup>106</sup> Complementing this agenda, Secretary of State Rubio has invoked narrow and rarely used legal frameworks to detain and strip the legal status of foreign students who promote political speech the administration considers oppositional to its foreign-policy agenda.<sup>107</sup>

Agency regulators are seeking legal and financial penalties against those who don't toe Trump's line, chilling expression with investigations into mundane legal activity, and shifting the constitutional and legal definitions of long-standing frameworks to allow Trump's henchmen to go after otherwise protected speech and conduct.

---

## C. SUPERCHARGING THE MILITARIZED POLICE STATE

Normalizing the police state has been one of the most visible hallmarks of the Trump administration, with online images showing law enforcement's militarized and brutal treatment of people — particularly protesters and the press.<sup>108</sup>



Militarized law enforcement and National Guard in Los Angeles.

Social and traditional media constantly replay images and videos that normalize the violence of these attacks: masked agents tearing families apart, teargassing reporters, shooting people with rubber bullets, assaulting participants in peaceful gatherings and throwing people to the ground. Many people have come under attack for exercising their right to gather peacefully in public, record encounters with law enforcement and make their voices heard.

The Department of Defense won't deny plans to activate the National Guard in all 50 states to "quell unrest" ahead of the 2026 midterms.<sup>109</sup> This is, in part, an effort to normalize police presence ahead of the midterm elections — and slowly erode the concept and practice of free and fair elections.<sup>110</sup> Ari Berman of *Mother Jones* explains how these forces may play out in 2026:

"Trump's mass deportation agenda could evolve into a vast election policing apparatus deployed against his political opponents. That could include the president federalizing the National Guard [...] and ordering the military to patrol the polls, demanding citizenship checks at polling stations, authorizing ICE raids in Democratic areas in the runup to the election, and arresting political leaders who don't comply with his policies."<sup>111</sup>

At a minimum, the increased police presence in cities around the country has led to violence and attacks on protesters and the press. Law enforcement has used overly militarized methods to crack down on anti-Trump demonstrations as opposed to right-leaning ones.<sup>112</sup> Trump has pardoned all of the Jan. 6 insurrection defendants in a move that further distorts the concept of what peaceful protest means.<sup>113</sup>

An increased military presence — which Trump called for in Los Angeles, Chicago, Portland and elsewhere — has ushered in aggressive surveillance of protest gatherings, ICE's disappearances of U.S. citizens and immigrants alike, and a deeply chilling environment in which people must weigh the potentially serious consequences of exercising their basic First Amendment right to assemble.

## D. LEVERAGING HEAVYWEIGHT CORPORATE CAPITULATION

Corporate media and Big Tech companies consistently choose profits over people and power over principle. They do so by aligning their companies with those in power to evade scrutiny and liability — and to build their own wealth.<sup>114</sup> VIP figures like Sam Altman, Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Mark Zuckerberg and others manipulate legacy and social-media platforms to amplify their views and those of allied billionaires, bigots and bullies while oversaturating the public with hate and lies.

Platforms like Meta, X and YouTube have all rolled back policies, staffing, promises and infrastructure that formerly mitigated harm, lies and scalable manipulation on their platforms. They claim they've done so to protect free speech. They've also rolled back election-integrity, civil-rights, trust and safety, and responsible AI teams — leaving content moderation to artificial tools and community notes. The result prioritizes eyeballs over facts, boosting dangerous rhetoric from Trump and other authoritarian leaders.

Meanwhile, the biggest billionaire-owned media companies in the country curry favor with Trump to protect their own financial and business interests — which often clash with the journalistic mission of those papers and broadcast stations.<sup>115</sup> Many of the top 35 corporate media companies have compromised journalistic independence in exchange for regulatory favors, financial settlements and political power.

**CORPORATE MEDIA AND BIG TECH COMPANIES CONSISTENTLY CHOOSE PROFITS OVER PEOPLE AND POWER OVER PRINCIPLE. THEY DO SO BY ALIGNING THEIR COMPANIES WITH THOSE IN POWER TO EVADE SCRUTINY AND LIABILITY — AND TO BUILD THEIR OWN WEALTH.**

As Trump's censorship campaign has unfolded, corporate capitulation has fueled a top-down degradation of the information environment as a small group of media and tech overlords help reshape our attitudes and behaviors in ways that complement and enable Trump's distorted reality.<sup>116</sup>

## E. IGNORING FACTS, REMOVING INFORMATION, REWRITING HISTORY, LYING ON THE RECORD

The administration has canceled official research and reporting, defunding entire offices tasked with holding the administration accountable.<sup>117</sup> It has deleted government websites and disappeared official data in clear violation of open-records law.

Removal of history, diversity and facts is one of the most distinctive ills of this administration's attack on free speech — threatening not just the official record but the public's ability to access such critical information.<sup>118</sup> Early in the term, the administration terminated privacy officers and other employees from the federal office charged with responding to FOIA requests.<sup>119</sup> In March, the administration began purging an extensive list of words and phrases — everything from “accessible” to “injustice” to “vulnerable populations” — from public-facing websites and encouraged official agency limits on the use of such words.<sup>120</sup> Trump called for the dismantling of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, instituting a new executive director who promised to “restore patriotism” — an approach that may likely alter official readings about history.<sup>121</sup>

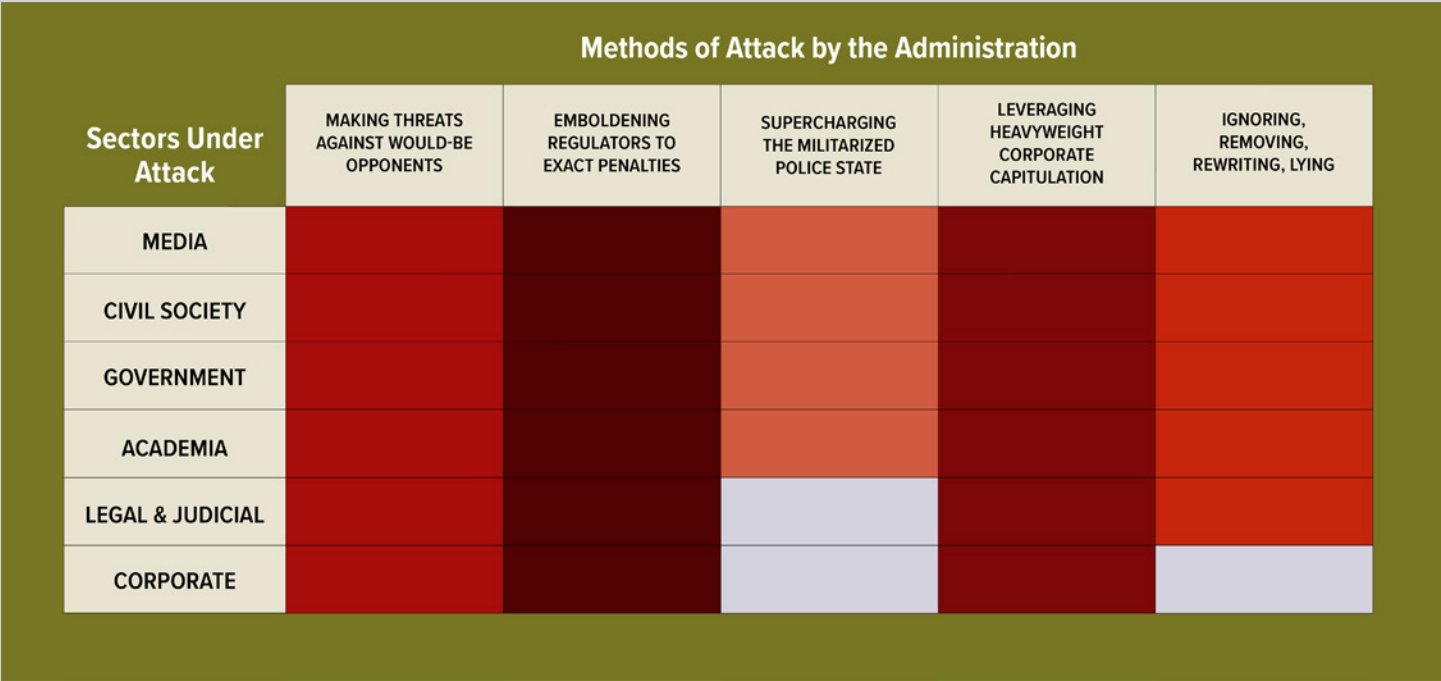
In the months that followed, the administration defunded entire offices and gutted most staff, including at Voice of America, the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency and the Wilson Center.<sup>122</sup> The Education and Justice Departments have discontinued or altogether wiped civil-rights investigations.<sup>123</sup> Official website data and government-research archives have been scrubbed from public-facing websites.<sup>124</sup> Agencies have stopped following open-records guidelines governing data retention.<sup>125</sup> And the White House has even promised that it is “actively” looking into removing entire constitutional frameworks,

including the most essential due process under habeas corpus.<sup>126</sup>

When faced with inconvenient facts, the administration ignores, rewrites, removes and deletes — anything, any time. Trump himself has actively violated the law at least six times during his second term, according to the federal watchdog agency Government Accountability Office.<sup>127</sup> These instances do not even include Trump’s disregard for the law during the government shutdown in November. And a New York University law journal analyzed hundreds of lawsuits and found at least 35 examples in which judges have explicitly said that the government’s filings contain lies, sometimes appearing to be knowingly false evidence, fake witnesses or accounts, fake sworn declarations and other falsities.<sup>128</sup> “Trust that had been earned over generations had been lost in weeks,” said one judge.<sup>129</sup>

F. CHARTING THE SCOPE AND SCALE OF ATTACKS ON FREE SPEECH

The government’s backsliding on core free-expression principles is an active, protean threat to our society — and a bellwether for broader democratic erosion. Every sector has faced multiple forms of attack, often involving compounding efforts to erode freedom and dissent. See figure below.



## V.

# Despite Legal Losses, the Government's Censorship Campaign Is Unprecedented in U.S. History

**The First Amendment is specifically meant to safeguard against the exact course of events this administration has set off — protecting individuals who seek to hold government officials accountable on the public stage, without fear of retribution.**

---

By and large, courts have slapped down the administration's censorial actions. Halfway through 2025, the Center for American Progress found that at least 39 separate judges appointed by five different presidents — including Trump — have ruled against White House overreach.<sup>130</sup>

District and appellate courts have issued temporary restraining orders and preliminary injunctions preventing the administration from targeting opponents with politically motivated investigations, cutting off funding due to political disagreements, and targeting press and protesters with militarized attacks on the ground.<sup>131</sup>

Courts have also ruled that the administration's chilling actions have clearly violated the First Amendment. A federal judge ruled in November that the Trump administration violated the First Amendment rights of Education Department employees when it replaced their out-of-office email notifications with partisan language blaming

Democrats for the government shutdown.<sup>132</sup>

A federal judge in Oregon shut down the administration's tactics targeting protesters, finding that there was no evidence protesters hampered the president's policies.<sup>133</sup> And in one sweeping ruling, a district court judge in Massachusetts ruled that the Trump administration — as part of a broad assault on people's civil rights — violated the First Amendment when it carried out a policy of arresting, detaining and deporting noncitizen students and faculty members for ideological reasons.<sup>134</sup>

These rulings affirm the First Amendment's fundamental premise,<sup>135</sup> which include defending the expressive rights of the media, protesters, students, faculty, universities and law firms.<sup>136</sup>

Yet in the handful of cases that have reached the Supreme Court, "the conservative justices appear to be using highly technical and narrow procedural decisions to avoid directly confronting the Trump administration and its seemingly unconstitutional actions."<sup>137</sup> The Center for American Progress points out that by "punting decisions on merits and permitting these seemingly unconstitutional actions to continue, the court is providing President Trump time to consolidate an anti-constitutional regime."<sup>138</sup>

Numerous experts and scholars affirm that this administration is doing far more than previous ones to target and undermine the First Amendment.<sup>139</sup>

**“ [T]HE PRESIDENT'S PALPABLE MISUNDERSTANDING THAT THE GOVERNMENT SIMPLY CANNOT SEEK RETRIBUTION FOR SPEECH HE DISDAINS POSES A GREAT THREAT TO AMERICANS' FREEDOM OF SPEECH.”**

—Judge William G. Young, senior U.S. district judge of the United States District Court for the District of Massachusetts (*American Association of University Professors v. Rubio*)

Their studies have shown that “the Trump administration has violated and chilled free speech on many occasions.”<sup>140</sup> ACLU First Amendment experts note that “The Trump administration has engaged in the most flagrant campaign against free expression [...] This is a revanchist administration that has gone after its critics.”<sup>141</sup>

Just shy of a year into this presidential term, the incessant nature of First Amendment attacks reveal unprecedented backsliding on U.S. freedoms. The effect is palpable as millions may think twice about core First Amendment and associational habits: speaking out, filming police, protesting, reporting, traveling abroad or even posting dissenting views online.

Although the United States has fallen precipitously in its press-freedom, rule-of-law and democratic-governance rankings over the last decade,<sup>142</sup> analysis focusing on 2025 points to some of the most extreme degradations in democratic practice. In 2024, the Economist Intelligence Unit began classifying the United States as a “flawed democracy.”<sup>143</sup> And between January and April 2025, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) announced that it issued 20 alerts — twice as many as in any of the previous two full years — documenting instances in which the U.S. government eroded rules, institutions and norms that had shaped the country’s democracy. Of note, IDEA named specific attacks on the First Amendment as uniquely concerning, including “efforts to restrict academic freedom, criminalize protest activity, [...] selectively restrict media access to the executive and circumvent normal due process.”<sup>144</sup>

Democratic backsliding is on the rise worldwide.<sup>145</sup> As of 2023, “global freedom declined for the 18th consecutive year,” marked by deterioration of political rights and civil liberties in 52 countries.<sup>146</sup> According to the Cornell Chronicle, this backsliding is not emerging “from dramatic coups, military aggression or civil war, but from autocratic leaders leveraging democratic institutions — election officials, legislatures, courts and the media — to consolidate executive power.”<sup>147</sup>

Creeping authoritarianism can be hard to recognize in real time. Global leaders subvert reality, suppress dissent, reward harassment, and sideline independent journalism and marginalized voices. These efforts chip away at democratic norms even as rulers claim they’re needed to defend democracy — a common authoritarian tactic.<sup>148</sup>

In countries around the world, from Egypt to Malaysia to Thailand, governments have used their militaries to violently detain dissidents, refugees and migrants.<sup>149</sup> So too are judges increasingly enlisted to exact the political bidding of autocrats hoping to reshape the law.<sup>150</sup>

Compare these tactics to Trump’s deployment of the military and his verbal threats of impeachment against judges who are simply upholding U.S. law.<sup>151</sup> The U.N. Human Rights Council has scrutinized judicial capture in other countries — and called for robust independence of judiciary bodies around the world.<sup>152</sup>

A March 15 *Atlantic* essay by Hungarian investigative journalist András Pethő recounts how Viktor Orbán rose to power by consolidating control and building his own media universe — while simultaneously placing a stranglehold on the independent press:

“As I watch from afar what’s happening to the free press in the United States during the first weeks of Trump’s second presidency — the verbal bullying, the legal harassment, the buckling by media owners in the face of threats — it all looks very familiar. The MAGA authorities have learned Orbán’s lessons well.”<sup>153</sup>

This sounds a not-too-distant echo of the exact same methods Trump is deploying now to suppress dissent and undermine official accountability.



## VI. The People's Playbook: Coordinated, Systemic Resistance to Blunt Trump's Tyranny

Against the backdrop of this global rise in authoritarianism, resistance in all forms is essential. In the United States, coordinated resistance against the administration's censorial campaign has become a meaningful — and urgent — tool to safeguard the First Amendment. As Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa shared with Free Press: "A lot of whether America survives will depend on what you do now. Every day you do not act means you get weaker."<sup>154</sup>

Massive demonstrations like No Kings matter. Such protests have been larger than other protest gatherings in U.S. history: They've grown in scale throughout 2025 and have even reached far-right "Trump country."<sup>155</sup> This is just one indicator of the immense power that the exercise of our free-speech rights has. Communities must continue to protest and ally with others rejecting the administration's tactics. But protest cannot be our only tool.<sup>156</sup>

Lawsuits challenging Trump's unconstitutional actions, largely resulting in positive rulings, must continue. They uphold the rule of law and give communities hope that these institutions can withstand authoritarian pressure. Likewise, media coverage that exposes the administration's authoritarian goals must continue as a bulwark against encroaching consolidation of the executive machinery.

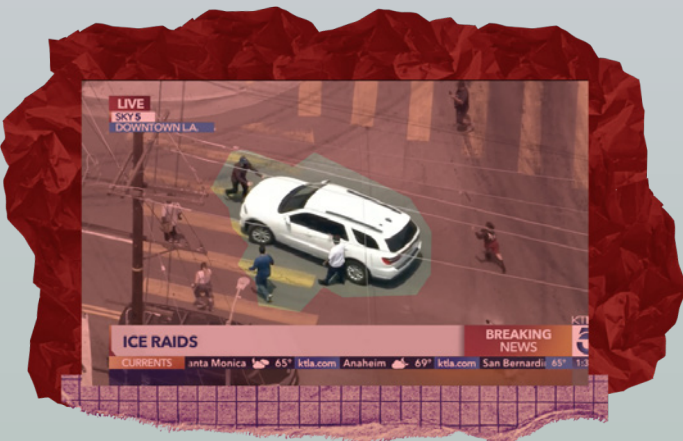
**“ A LOT OF WHETHER AMERICA SURVIVES WILL DEPEND ON WHAT YOU DO NOW. EVERY DAY YOU DO NOT ACT MEANS YOU GET WEAKER.”**

*—Maria Ressa, Nobel Peace Prize laureate*

Demonstrators at the No Kings rally in New York. Source: Timothy Karr



Coordinated resistance can and should take various forms. When Disney/ABC, Nexstar and Sinclair yanked Jimmy Kimmel's show in response to FCC Chairman Carr's pressure campaign, coordinated and systemic public pressure online drove consumers to cancel their Disney subscriptions, compelling the company to reverse its decision. When ICE agents have gone after immigrants in cities like Los Angeles and New York City, swarms of bystanders have filmed ICE tactics and even blunted officials' most violent attacks on civilians.<sup>157</sup>



Civilians record law-enforcement efforts to target and detain individuals. Source: KTLA

At this moment, the incessant and chaotic attacks on freedom can make collective action feel daunting or even impossible. And while collective and sustained action is never fail-proof, it has disrupted the administration's censorship campaign.

History shows us that such sustained and diverse exercise of our First Amendment rights has overturned periods of abuse, corruption, inequality and injustice:

- a. Civil-rights leaders and movement activists used their free-speech rights to demand racial equality, culminating in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.<sup>158</sup>
- b. Literature, film and art — even and especially when banned — have exposed injustice

throughout history, making visible to wider audiences the harms of slavery, the violence law enforcement has inflicted on Black and Brown bodies, and the misogyny underlying violence against women.

- c. Anti-war coordination during the Vietnam War era leveraged free speech, mobilizing tremendous public opposition especially among student activists — and ultimately influencing government policy.<sup>159</sup>
- d. Persistent exercise of political speech by civil-rights coalitions — such as Change the Terms and #StopToxicTwitter, both of which Free Press led — resulted in congressional, FTC and state-lawmaker scrutiny of platform-accountability failures and the role social-media platforms play in democracy.<sup>160</sup>

Our own American hero, Frederick Douglass, declared in 1860 that “liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist.”<sup>161</sup> Free speech is not simply the individual right to say and behave however one chooses absent public consequence. Free speech is the most basic prerequisite for collective debate, discomfort, growth, repair, progress and a functioning democracy.

If only one person speaks out against injustice, their speech is notable, but it is also more vulnerable to attack and subversion under an administration like the current one. If more people speak out against injustice, the collective drumbeat can more easily withstand government reprisals. This principle must undergird the next several years of collective and sustained dissent. Democracies erode little by little; would-be dictators need to scare only some of us and the rest will follow. The very reason we must speak out together is so we can leverage our collective power.<sup>162</sup>

Therefore, we need sustained and coordinated action by the broadest set of diverse actors. This kind of people's playbook — to counter Trump's authoritarian playbook — will be essential in ongoing fashion.

**Media entities** must invest in infrastructure to defend against the onslaught of attacks on reporters, photographers and producers in the field. This includes retaining legal counsel and developing stronger resources to train and prepare reporters. Media executives and editors must not shy away from critical reporting about the administration. Attacks on media come first because of the media's power to help people understand what's happening. Media companies and leaders must not obey in advance out of fear of retribution. Pursue diverse storytelling and news coverage; robustly cover and identify threats to democracy for all audiences. Outlets should not penalize journalists trying to hold leaders to account and should instead welcome critical news coverage and uphold their function as a watchdog for democracy.

**Civil-society leaders** must prepare to respond to the rise of state-sanctioned propaganda ahead of the 2026 midterms. Anything less abdicates our ability to fight on an even playing field. Speak like democracy depends on it, because it does. Practice deep sector-wide solidarity by uniting cross-identity and cross-issue organizations against specific threats and attempts to punish groups based on their political speech. Connect with constituents and protect the most vulnerable communities — especially critics and dissidents — from powerful figures' scapegoating attacks.

**Lawyers and law firms** must bolster their pro-democracy capacity to better support and defend the field. This includes pro bono commitments to support public-interest litigation. Entities like the American Bar Association have made tremendous statements of support for democracy and the rule of law.<sup>163</sup> State-bar associations should follow, encouraging public-interest programming.<sup>164</sup> Firms should augment such efforts by creating easy avenues for lawyers to take on or advise on cases defending journalistic activities, protest rights, and basic First Amendment conduct for students and others.

## **FREE SPEECH IS THE MOST BASIC PREREQUISITE FOR COLLECTIVE DEBATE, DISCOMFORT, GROWTH, REPAIR, PROGRESS AND A FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY.**

**People** must continue protesting to express collective rejection of the administration's attacks on democracy.<sup>165</sup> The public must stay active in directly engaging with democracy. Options include: attending a local government meeting, participating in mass protests, organizing local protests, voicing solidarity with minority groups under attack, running for office, donating to local media and pro-democracy nonprofits and committing to fact checking in social-media groups. Call state and federal representatives, who should convey our interests with their votes at the Capitol.

**Funders** must open up their purse strings to: 1) fund local and independent media, 2) support nonprofits documenting anti-democratic rollbacks, 3) support organizations aiding vulnerable groups, 4) thoroughly fund organizations facing persecution for their speech and activism and 5) invest in short-, medium- and long-term projects that protect free speech and build a media system that can better withstand authoritarian attacks.

**Brands and corporate leaders** should be on the right side of history and publicly reject encroaching authoritarian takeover in the private sector, full stop. Safeguard equity and employee rights in corporate policies, and fight for expression and safety in corporate social-media practices. Leverage access and dollars to protect vulnerable communities and those fighting on behalf of these groups, including nonprofits and local media.



# Recommendations: Principle Over Power

Democratic erosion is rarely a single dramatic break; it's a series of plausibly deniable moves that normalize power over principle.<sup>166</sup>

The troubling trends documented here amount to a systemic assault on the conditions that make free speech meaningful and equitable in a democracy. The response must be equally systemic and coordinated.

Free speech matters more than ever: Voicing dissenting views can be a barrier to consolidating power and an antidote to the lies the powerful tell. People are not powerless against authoritarian power grabs. If we were, authoritarian forces would

not try so ardently to quash our voices. In other words: Our collective, diverse and free speech is a powerful, necessary response — and likely the most urgent solution — to rising authoritarianism.

Harvard University's Mathias Risse notes:

"Of course, freedom of speech must be protected as part of a broader bundle of democratic rights. Individuals with enormous wealth can literally buy newspapers, radio stations, or TV channels and can spend unlimited funds on political campaigns. Too much money in politics is one of the greatest problems in American politics just because it undermines any resemblance of a fair marketplace of ideas. In a healthy democracy, other factors must also be promoted so that free speech strengthens, rather than undermines, democratic life."<sup>167</sup>

Alongside the urgent work of the people's playbook to oppose government censorship, we must consider what comes next. We cannot return to a pre-Trump politics or populace. We have to develop and execute a vision for something better.

This work is daunting. It is exhausting. But it is where we are now. And it will not improve — nor will the hemorrhaging of our rights magically stop — simply because we find the reality displeasing. As Leah Hunt-Hendrix and Astra Taylor imagine in the 2025 prologue to their book *Solidarity*: "public opinion and policy are not static, and authoritarianism is not inevitable. The construction of solidarity rooted in an understanding that our fates are interlinked, and that we need one another to survive, can change hearts, minds, and more."<sup>168</sup>

All of us must develop the muscle and courage to resist capitulation under Trump. Solidarity of resistance is essential to prioritizing principle over power. We must cultivate the framework of egalitarian politics, the principles of people over profits. Our very freedoms — all of ours — hang in the balance.

**Free Press is focused on three meaningful areas of work to protect a flourishing First Amendment for all in the digital age:**

- 1. The Government Must Rebuild Broken Constitutional Promises**
  - Fully Realize Constitutional Rights of Equity & Speech
  - Reinstate Civil Rights & Civil Servant Regulations
  - Restore Official Records of U.S. History
- 2. Structural Solutions Must Advance Information & Societal Health**
  - Mitigate Consolidation of Media & Tech Systems
  - Ban Billionaire Control Absent Accountability Checks
  - Invest Substantial Funding in Local, Diverse and Noncommercial Accountability Journalism
- 3. Embolden Our Institutions to Protect People Over Profit**
  - Give People Control of Their Data
  - Properly Train & Hold Government Accountable to Enhance Speech Rights
  - Invest Substantial Funding to Build Public-Good Technology

**DEMOCRATIC EROSION IS RARELY A SINGLE  
DRAMATIC BREAK; IT'S A SERIES OF PLAUSIBLY  
DENIABLE MOVES THAT NORMALIZE POWER  
OVER PRINCIPLE.**



# Methodology & Acknowledgements

Our analysis examines more than 500 reports of verbal threats, executive orders, presidential memoranda, statements from the White House, actions by regulators and agencies, military and law-enforcement deployment and activities, litigation, removal of website language on .gov websites, removal of official history and information at national parks and museums and discontinued data collection by the federal government.

The reporting we analyzed originates from various lists that track official actions the Trump administration has taken to undermine democracy. Few lists exist that provide holistic and comprehensive chronicles of every action the U.S. government has taken to subvert the First Amendment.<sup>169</sup> One list, the Trump Action Tracker, is maintained by Professor Christina Pagel of University College London and was particularly helpful. Other reporting from diverse news sources, third-party and civil-society reports, while instructive, were limited in scope and time, as they do not examine the First Amendment field in its entirety nor the administration's term thus far.

Nora Benavidez is the lead author of this report. The development and production of this report could not have happened without support from Free Press colleagues Craig Aaron, Candace Clement, Jessica J. González, Timothy Karr and Jenna Ruddock. This report was edited by Amy Kroin and designed by Courtney Morrison and Sara Pritt, also of Free Press. Maria Nunes of Neta Collab illustrated the front and back covers. Julia Sorrenti and Ambar López, also of Neta Collab, edited the images in the report.

Free Press is a U.S.-based nonpartisan organization that defends free expression and press freedom and seeks to build the media and tech needed to achieve a multiracial democracy. Free Press believes that positive social change, racial justice and meaningful engagement in public life require equitable access to technology, diverse and independent ownership of media platforms, and journalism that holds leaders accountable and tells people what's actually happening in their communities. Free Press is a leader in the nationwide fight for free speech. Learn more at [freepress.net](https://freepress.net).

# Appendix: Timeline of Attacks on the First Amendment

Below is a timeline of nearly 200 of the most potent examples of the federal government's assaults on the First Amendment in 2025. We focus exclusively on federal actions that implicate the First Amendment.

To create this list, Free Press examined original reporting on hundreds of actions — including verbal threats, arrests, lawsuits, regulatory actions and military deployments — by Trump, the Trump White House, Trump-appointed federal regulators, the National Guard, law-enforcement agencies and other branches of government. Free Press consulted an array of civil-society trackers and research reports analyzing aspects of this issue.

## KEY: TARGETED SECTOR METHOD OF ATTACK

- Academia
- Civil Society
- Government
- Corporate
- Legal & Judicial
- Media
- Making Threats Against Would-Be Opponents (Threats)
- Emboldening Regulators to Exact Penalties (Regulator)
- Supercharging the Militarized Police State (Police State)
- Leveraging Heavyweight Corporate Capitulation (Capitulation)
- Ignoring, Removing, Rewriting, Lying (Distortion)

## January

### 1. CIVIL SOCIETY | GOVERNMENT THREATS | DISTORTION

President Trump signed the executive order “Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship.” The White House inverted First Amendment principles, casting prior public-health and election-integrity efforts as “federal censorship.” The order issued a directive to “restore freedom of speech” by constraining government interactions with platforms and civil society on mis/disinformation. The order urged the attorney general to investigate the Biden administration in the context of free speech, and to seek remedial actions, leaving vague what these actions may be. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-freedom-of-speech-and-ending-federal-censorship/>

### 2. MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR | DISTORTION

President Trump signed the executive order “Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid.” The White House froze funding for programs run by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), including programs designed to empower civil-society and human-rights groups, journalists and others responding to digital repression and internet shutdowns. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/reevaluating-and-realigning-united-states-foreign-aid/>

### 3. ACADEMIA REGULATOR | DISTORTION

President Trump signed the executive order “Additional Measures to Combat Antisemitism.” The White House outlined a broad crackdown on what Trump called “the explosion of antisemitism” on U.S. college campuses. The order falsely claimed that foreign students who are lawfully in the United States on visas do not enjoy the same free-speech or due-process rights as citizens. This was the political and legal origin of later attacks by the Department of Homeland Security, State Department and other agencies targeting foreign students and foreign journalists — and justifying increased surveillance of people’s on- and offline speech. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/additional-measures-to-combat-anti-semitism/>

### 4. CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR | DISTORTION

President Trump signed an executive order with a blanket pardon for all defendants involved in the Jan. 6 insurrection, erasing criminal histories for at least 1,500 people. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cjw4vjvlgxpo>

**5. GOVERNMENT REGULATOR | DISTORTION**

President Trump signed an executive order to re-weaponize the federal workforce for political loyalty by reinstating and expanding “Schedule F,” which strips civil-service protections from policy-influencing roles. Politicizing thousands of expert positions is not a speech policy per se, but it erodes rule-of-law guardrails and invites viewpoint-based enforcement across agencies that interface with media, culture and information flows. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-accountability-to-policy-influencing-positions-within-the-federal-workforce/>

**6. GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**

President Trump signed an executive order ending all diversity, equity and inclusion programs within the federal government. This included union contracts and employment practices and also directed the government to terminate all positions related to DEI. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-radical-and-wasteful-government-dei-programs-and-preferencing/>

**7. CIVIL SOCIETY | GOVERNMENT | CORPORATE REGULATOR**

President Trump signed an executive order requiring executive departments and agencies to terminate “all discriminatory and illegal preferences, mandates, policies, programs, activities, guidance, regulations, enforcement actions, consent orders and requirements.” This rescinded decades-long practices for federal contractors to develop and implement affirmative-action plans that identify and address underrepresentation based on sex or race. Any receipt of federal funding now requires the recipient to agree that its compliance with federal antidiscrimination laws is material to the government’s payment decisions under the False Claims Act. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/ending-illegal-discrimination-and-restoring-merit-based-opportunity/>; <https://www.skadden.com/insights/publications/2025/02/the-informed-board/dei-under-siege>

**8. CIVIL SOCIETY | ACADEMIA REGULATOR**

The Office of Management and Budget placed a freeze on all federal grants that supported DEI programs, “woke” programs, nonprofits and other environmentally progressive projects. <https://phys.org/news/2023-09-reveals-trump-falsehoods-misperceptions.html>

**9. CORPORATE CAPITULATION**

Meta paid roughly \$25 million to settle a 2021 lawsuit with President Trump over the company’s suspension of Trump’s accounts following the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. <https://www.wsj.com/us-news/law/trump-signs-agreement-calling-for-meta-to-pay-25-million-to-settle-suit-6f734c8c>

**10. CIVIL SOCIETY | ACADEMIA REGULATOR | POLICE STATE**

The Department of Homeland Security rescinded a decades-old policy that forbade officers from taking immigration-enforcement actions in or near “sensitive” or “protected” places such as houses of worship, schools and hospitals. <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/01/21/statement-dhs-spokesperson-directives-expanding-law-enforcement-and-ending-abuse>

**11. MEDIA THREATS | REGULATOR**

Federal Communications Commission Chairman Brendan Carr opened investigations into NPR and PBS, claiming the networks aired potentially illegal commercials. <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/30/nx-s1-5281162/fcc-npr-pbs-investigation>

## February

**12. MEDIA REGULATOR**

The Defense Department ordered a number of top media outlets — including CNN, *The Hill*, NBC, *The New York Times*, NPR, Politico and *The Washington Post* — to vacate their spots at the Pentagon. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/pentagon-doubles-number-news-outlets-rotate-out-office-spaces-2025-02-08/>

**13. CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR**

The administration granted Elon Musk and DOGE access to the Treasury Department’s sensitive payment system. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/01/musk-claims-doge-lax-treasury-00201946>

**14. GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**

Trump fired the national archivist, who had been tasked with keeping official records. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-fires-archivist-of-the-united-states-colleen-shogan/>

**15. CORPORATE CAPITULATION**

The platform X, formerly Twitter, settled a lawsuit with President Trump, paying roughly \$10 million after the president sued the platform for banning his accounts following the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. <https://apnews.com/article/trump-twitter-x-elon-musk-google-9dcb52b84061efdd2cdd102678dc8fea>

16. **CIVIL SOCIETY | GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
Trump signed the executive order “Eradicating Anti-Christian Bias,” which is designed “to protect the religious freedoms of Americans and end the anti-Christian weaponization of government.” <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/eradicating-anti-christian-bias/>
17. **GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
The Justice Department fired over a dozen prosecutors who had worked on criminal cases against Trump. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/04/trump-jack-smith-special-counsel-prosecutors-firings>
18. **GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
Trump fired Kennedy Center staff and appointed himself chair. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/feb/07/trump-kennedy-center>
19. **MEDIA REGULATOR**  
Trump ordered the General Services Administration to cancel every single contract with media entities. <https://www.axios.com/2025/02/06/trump-politico-subscriptions-doge-elon-musk>
20. **MEDIA THREATS | DISTORTION**  
President Trump banned well-established media outlets like The Associated Press, HuffPost and Reuters from accessing White House meetings for refusing to parrot his propaganda. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/white-house-bars-ap-reuters-other-media-covering-trump-cabinet-meeting-2025-02-26/>
21. **LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**  
Trump and Musk lobbed verbal attacks at a judge who ruled against the administration. Trump called the judge “a disgrace” and Musk called for the judge’s impeachment. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/02/10/trump-criticizes-judges-over-executive-power/78378595007/>
22. **CIVIL SOCIETY DISTORTION**  
The administration removed an official report on disappearances and murders of Native Americans, citing the supposed need for compliance with the anti-DEI executive order Trump signed in January. <https://oklahomawatch.org/2025/11/14/trump-administration-removes-report-on-missing-and-murdered-native-americans-calling-it-dei-content/>
23. **GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
The Department of Health and Human Services forced workers to review government-website language for words like “gay,” “nonbinary,” “sexuality” and more. <https://www.404media.co/the-bigotry-is-astounding-engineers-waste-time-and-money-scanning-gov-sites-for-transgender-and-other-terms/>
24. **GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
The administration terminated members of the privacy team and employees from the office charged with responding to FOIA requests. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/18/politics/opm-privacy-team-fired/index.html>
25. **LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS | DISTORTION**  
The White House announced it was suspending security clearances for some of Covington and Burling LLP’s lawyers and initiating a review and termination of the firm’s federal contracts. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/02/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-directs-suspension-of-security-clearances-and-evaluation-of-government-contracts-for-involvement-in-government-weaponization/>
26. **MEDIA THREATS**  
The White House announced that its press team would select the press pool, which the White House Correspondents’ Association historically assigned. <https://bsky.app/profile/justinbaragona.bsky.social/post/3lizijbzgk2v>
27. **MEDIA REGULATOR**  
Federal Trade Commission Chairman Andrew Ferguson opened an investigation into the diversity practices at Verizon. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/fcc-chair-opens-probe-into-diversity-practices-verizon-2025-02-27/>

## March

28. **MEDIA THREATS | DISTORTION**  
President Trump delivered remarks to lawyers at the Department of Justice, urging them to find ways to criminalize independent media coverage. He tore into news outlets for their coverage of his administration. “These newspapers are really no different than a highly paid political operative. And it has to stop. It has to be illegal,” he said. <https://bsky.app/profile/atrupar.com/post/3lkegckscq42s>



**29. ACADEMIA REGULATOR | THREATS**

The acting civil rights director at the Department of Education sent letters to 60 educational institutions warning they could lose federal funding if they didn't do more to combat antisemitism. <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-education-civil-rights-sends-letters-60-universities-under-investigation-antisemitic-discrimination-and-harassment>

**30. GOVERNMENT | CIVIL SOCIETY DISTORTION**

The administration created an extensive list of words and phrases for the government to purge from its acceptable parlance and encouraged official agency limits on the use of such words. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/07/us/trump-federal-agencies-websites-words-dei.html>

**31. GOVERNMENT THREATS | DISTORTION**

Trump called for the dismantling of the Institute of Museum and Library Services while instituting a new executive director who promised to "restore patriotism." <https://apnews.com/article/institute-doge-musk-museum-library-services-executive-order-trump-30ebde013ce3e9f97e2f4af72c869c0b>

**32. MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS | DISTORTION**

Trump signed another executive order that hollowed out the U.S. Agency for Global Media (USAGM), which oversees or funds media outlets including Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Voice of America (VOA). The USAGM also oversees Radio Free Asia, which supporters say has been one of the most reliable tools the government has used to combat Chinese propaganda. This was later blocked by a district court judge. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/continuing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy/> ; <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/26/nx-s1-5341321/trump-radio-free-europe-radio-liberty-restraining-order>

**33. LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS | REGULATOR**

Trump issued a memorandum that directs heads of the Homeland Security and Justice Departments to "seek sanctions against attorneys and law firms who engage in frivolous, unreasonable and vexatious litigation against the United States," or in matters that come before federal agencies. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/preventing-abuses-of-the-legal-system-and-the-federal-court/>

**34. CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS**

On social media, Trump said that funding for universities would be revoked if their students engaged in "illegal protests." He said such students would be deported. There is no known legal definition for "illegal" protests; by definition, protests are protected First Amendment activity. [https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/trump-issues-ban-on-illegal-college-protests-as-he-threatens-students-arrest-5Hjd24J\\_2/](https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/trump-issues-ban-on-illegal-college-protests-as-he-threatens-students-arrest-5Hjd24J_2/)

**35. LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**

President Trump signed an executive order against Perkins Coie LLP, specifically directed to what he disparagingly described as "[t]he dishonest and dangerous activity of the law firm Perkins Coie LLP." The central complaint was the role of Perkins Coie in hiring Fusion GPS, which, he alleged, had manufactured a "false 'dossier' designed to steal" the 2016 election. Trump ordered Attorney General Pam Bondi and others to "suspend any active security clearances" of Coie employees and to "terminate any contract, to the maximum extent permitted by applicable law, including the Federal Acquisition Regulation, for which Perkins Coie has been hired to perform any service." Such agencies were also largely to "refrain from hiring employees of Perkins Coie." <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/addressing-risks-from-perkins-coie.llp/>

**36. LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**

Trump signed an executive order against the Paul Weiss law firm for bringing actions against people who took part in the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, and for investigating Trump during his first term. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/addressing-risks-from-paul-weiss/> ; <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/capitol-riot-of-jan-6-2021/>

**37. LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**

Trump signed an executive order targeting Susman Godfrey, the law firm that worked on the case in which Dominion Voting Systems sued Fox News for airing lies during the 2020 election. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/09/trump-executive-order-fox-news-law-firm>

**38. LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**

Trump signed an executive order targeting Jenner & Block, saying it had undermined justice by engaging in "obvious partisan representations to achieve political ends." The order specifically details the hiring of Andrew Weissmann after Weissman helped Robert Mueller, the special counsel in the Trump-Russia investigation. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/addressing-risks-from-jenner-block/>

**39. LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**

President Trump signed an order targeting another law firm, WilmerHale, as punishment for its connections with Mueller, who worked at the firm before and after he was special counsel in the Trump-Russia investigation. As with the other orders, Trump moved to terminate all government contracts with the law firm, suspended any security clearances, barred the firm's lawyers from federal buildings and prohibited federal government employees from "engaging with" them. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/addressing-risks-from-wilmerhale/>

**40. LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**

President Trump issued verbal threats about judges who didn't rule in his favor, calling one U.S. district judge a "Radical Left Lunatic" and urging Congress to impeach such judges. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/18/trump-impeachment-judge-deportations-00235173>

**41. GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**

The *New York Times* reports that from January to March, hundreds of terabytes of digital resources analyzing data were removed from government websites. "While in many cases the underlying data still exists, the tools that make it possible for the public and researchers to use that data have been removed." <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/21/climate/government-websites-climate-environment-data.html>

**42. ACADEMIA THREATS**

The administration paused \$175 million in funding to the University of Pennsylvania, disapproving of its athletics policy. <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-politics-and-policy/trump-administration-pauses-funding-upenn-trans-athlete-rcna197055>

**43. ACADEMIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE | THREATS**

Mahmoud Khalil was arrested and detained for political speech on Columbia University's campus. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/mar/14/why-was-mahmoud-khalil-arrested>

**44. ACADEMIA | MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE | THREATS**

Rümeysa Öztürk was arrested and detained for political speech in a student Op-Ed for Tufts University. <https://bsky.app/profile/paleofuture.bsky.social/post/3llccznpbvc2r>

**45. ACADEMIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE | THREATS**

Badar Khan Suri was arrested and detained for his wife's family's affiliation with a Hamas member. <https://www.news18.com/world/badar-khan-suri-indian-academic-in-us-faces-deportation-for-alleged-hamas-ties-9267660.html>

**46. ACADEMIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**

A scientist from Harvard was detained and pressured over her antiwar speech about Russia. <https://theins.press/en/news/280037>

**47. ACADEMIA | CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR | THREATS**

Secretary of State Rubio said that at least 300 foreign students have seen their visas revoked under President Trump, a far higher number than was previously known. <https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5218410-ice-arrests-tufts-alabama-students-trump-immigration-crackdown-rumeysa-ozturk-khalil/>

**48. CIVIL SOCIETY DISTORTION**

Trump signed the executive order "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History," calling for the Department of Interior to determine whether, since Jan. 1, 2020, any monuments, memorials, statues and markers within the department's jurisdiction contain any descriptions, depictions or other content that "inappropriately disparage Americans past or living (including persons living in colonial times)." Additionally, it ordered the reinstatement of any preexisting monuments, memorials, statues and markers that have been removed or changed to "perpetuate a false reconstruction of American history, inappropriately minimize the value of certain historical events or figures, or include any other improper partisan ideology." <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/restoring-truth-and-sanity-to-american-history/>

**49. GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**

DOGE blocked 130 Wilson Center think-tank staff from accessing their emails and placed them on leave, with only five staff remaining. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/03/us/politics/wilson-center-shutdown-musk.html>

**50. MEDIA REGULATOR**

FCC Chairman Carr threatened to block mergers if media companies promoted "invidious DEI policies." <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/ip-law/fccs-carr-threatens-to-block-m-a-for-companies-with-dei-plans>

## April

### 51. MEDIA THREATS

The White House permanently removed wire services Bloomberg News and Reuters from access to the White House. <https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/latest-media-crackdown-white-house-limits-newswire-access-trump-2025-04-16/>

### 52. GOVERNMENT THREATS

Trump issued a memorandum about former CISA director Chris Krebs that revoked his security clearance and falsely claimed he is a “bad faith actor” for promoting “censorship” in his efforts to curb disinformation. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/04/addressing-risks-from-chris-krebs-and-government-censorship/>

### 53. CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS | REGULATOR

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services announced it would begin screening immigrants’ social media for evidence of antisemitic activity as grounds for denying immigration-benefit requests. <https://www.npr.org/2025/04/09/g-s1-59149/immigrants-social-media-antisemitism-dhs>

### 54. ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR

The administration threatened to place Columbia University on a consent decree as Trump pushed the Education Department to withhold funding for universities for “not behaving.” <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/10/trump-columbia-consent-decree>

### 55. ACADEMIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE | THREATS

Graduate student Mohsen Madawai was arrested and detained for political speech. <https://bsky.app/profile/premthakker.bsky.social/post/3lms5saohik2u>

### 56. MEDIA THREATS

The White House urged Congress to defund the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/14/business/media/trump-npr-pbs-funding.html>

### 57. ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR

The administration revoked \$4 million in funding to Princeton University as the White House considers the university’s work on topics including sea-level rise, coastal flooding and global warming to be promoting “exaggerated and implausible climate threats.” <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/10/trump-administration-cuts-princeton-climate-research-funding>

### 58. MEDIA DISTORTION

A reporter for The Associated Press was denied access to a White House event with the president in the Oval Office; these limits violate a court order. <https://thehill.com/homenews/media/5248116-ap-blocked-white-house/>

### 59. MEDIA REGULATOR

Attorney General Bondi issued a memorandum revoking a Biden-era policy that limited subpoenas for reporters’ phone records. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/25/pam-bondi-journalists-subpoenas>

### 60. LEGAL & JUDICIAL POLICE STATE | THREATS

A lawyer for a pro-Palestinian client was detained at Chicago Dearborn airport in an apparent case of political targeting. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/lawyer-u-m-protester-detained-232822905.html>

### 61. GOVERNMENT | ACADEMIA DISTORTION

The Naval Academy removed over 400 books from its library to curb diversity, equity and inclusion materials. <https://apnews.com/article/military-academies-dei-hegseth-trump-ba9731f24b4eb4bd9c02b568209f97af>

### 62. CORPORATE THREATS

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt accused Amazon of being “hostile and political” after a report from Punchbowl News said that the company would start displaying the exact cost of tariff-related price increases alongside all its products. Amazon hurried to issue a statement denying these policy changes and Trump praised Jeff Bezos. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/29/us/politics/trump-amazon-tariffs-prices.html>

### 63. ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR

The administration froze billions in funding for Harvard after the university rejected the administration’s demands, including pressure to shut down diversity, equity and inclusion programs. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/14/trump-harvard-funding-freeze>

**64. ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR**

The administration froze funding for Cornell and Northwestern, claiming that the campuses failed to protect Jewish students after allowing pro-Palestinian protests. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/08/trump-administration-cornell-northwestern-funding>

**65. MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS | REGULATOR**

Acting U.S. Attorney for Washington, D.C. Ed Martin accused Wikipedia of hosting “propaganda” and threatened to revoke its nonprofit c3 status. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/04/25/wikipedia-nonprofit-ed-martin-letter/>

**66. ACADEMIA THREATS**

The Department of Homeland Security threatened Harvard and demanded records of “illegal and violent” activities of its foreign-student visa holders. The administration is threatening to ban the university from enrolling foreign students altogether. <http://bbc.com/news/articles/c1egdy24v7po>

**67. GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**

The administration set to close down the State Department’s last remaining bastion to monitor foreign disinformation campaigns, known as the Counter Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (R/Fimi) hub. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/16/trump-state-department-foreign-disinformation>

**68. CIVIL SOCIETY DISTORTION**

President Trump fired Doug Emhoff (Kamala Harris’ husband) and former Biden chief of staff Ron Klain from the U.S. Holocaust Council, along with other Biden appointees. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/29/trump-fires-doug-emhoff-holocaust>

**69. GOVERNMENT THREATS**

The Office of Special Counsel announced changes to the interpretation of the Hatch Act, devised to insulate the federal workforce from political influence or coercion. These changes weaken the independence of workers and allow partisan paraphernalia. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/25/us/politics/trump-hatch-act.html>

**70. MEDIA THREATS**

Trump threatened an investigation into *The New York Times* after the outlet cited sources claiming Trump’s lawsuit against CBS was “baseless.” <https://meidasnews.com/news/trump-threatens-new-york-times-over-60-minutes-lawsuit-coverage>

**71. GOVERNMENT THREATS**

The FBI reassigned agents who were photographed kneeling during George Floyd protests in 2020. <https://apnews.com/article/fbi-george-floyd-kash-patel-c59a8d2e055dadea1adf5187f7ee3620>

## May

**72. MEDIA THREATS | REGULATOR**

President Trump signed an executive order to direct funding cuts for NPR and PBS. <https://apnews.com/article/trump-npr-pbs-republicans-public-broadcasting-f0e3e1acb96986732a0211833165bf84>

**73. MEDIA DISTORTION**

The White House launched a website to promote positive press about the president. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/01/white-house-trump-news-website>

**74. GOVERNMENT THREATS | DISTORTION**

Department of Homeland Security officials fired the FEMA director after he said something the president disagreed with. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/fema-leader-fired-trump-administration-cameron-hamilton/>

**75. CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS | REGULATOR**

The administration urged the Supreme Court to allow DOGE to access Social Security data on millions of Americans. The Supreme Court later granted this access. <https://apnews.com/article/doge-social-security-trump-administration-supreme-court-a38db8e9908e56b01265432f4d46e8e3>; <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/06/supreme-court-doge-data>

**76. ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR**

The Department of Education told Harvard University that it would cut its grant funding unless the institution met the administration’s demands. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/05/trump-harvard-grants>



**77. CIVIL SOCIETY | THREATS DISTORTION**

White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller announced that the White House is actively looking at ways to suspend habeas corpus, a fundamental legal tool for relief from constitutional violations that protects First Amendment and due-process rights afforded to everyone in the country. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5292820-white-house-miller-immigration-crackdown/>

**78. GOVERNMENT POLICE STATE**

ICE agents arrested the mayor of Newark while he was protesting near an ICE detention facility. <https://apnews.com/article/immigration-protest-ice-newark-mayor-arrested-5a2b3fed7da563c48d2f85831cf2194>

**79. GOVERNMENT THREATS**

The administration attacked an administrative judge who worked for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and tried to remove her for resisting White House directives to classify genders as “immutable sexes.” <https://apnews.com/article/eeoc-pushback-karen-ortiz-transgender-6ebc3cfb90298ae06f46d0ed4898733d>

**80. CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS | REGULATOR**

The Department of Justice’s “weaponization group” will go after people it cannot prosecute by naming and shaming them. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/doj-weaponization-group-will-shame-individuals-cant-charge-crimes-new-rcna206553>

**81. CIVIL SOCIETY | ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR**

Inspired by one of the president’s executive orders, several agencies cut grants funding misinformation studies, claiming to protect the First Amendment. Studying fake information, whether intentionally spread or by mistake, does not implicate the First Amendment, nor is it a censorship tactic researchers use. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/15/business/trump-online-misinformation-grants.html>

**82. MEDIA DISTORTION**

The White House fired roughly 600 contractors from Voice of America, apparently in defiance of a court order, after Trump claimed the outlet promoted radical views. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/16/trump-administration-voice-of-america-firings>

**83. CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR**

The Federal Trade Commission opened an investigation into the nonprofit Media Matters at the urging of Elon Musk for its research about X, the Musk-owned platform. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/22/technology/ftc-investigates-media-matters.html>

**84. GOVERNMENT THREATS | DISTORTION**

The Supreme Court issued a short order allowing the administration to fire agency heads without cause, giving a free pass for political reprisals when officials do not bow to Trump. <https://www.scotusblog.com/2025/05/supreme-court-allows-trump-to-remove-agency-heads-without-cause-for-now/>

**85. MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY | GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**

The White House removed transcripts of Trump speeches from government websites. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/white-house-purges-transcripts-trump-remarks-website-rcna208059>

**86. GOVERNMENT REGULATOR | DISTORTION**

The Pentagon broadened book-banning efforts, with Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth issuing a memo calling all military leaders, commands and academies to review all of the books in their libraries that address racism and sexism and to purge content related to diversity and inclusion. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/09/us/politics/pentagon-hegseth-dei-library-books.html>

**87. CIVIL SOCIETY | LEGAL & JUDICIAL REGULATOR**

The Department of Justice barred the nonpartisan American Bar Association from its longstanding role in vetting judicial nominations presidents make. <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/justice-department-curtails-aba-role-vetting-trumps-judicial-nominees-2025-05-29/>

## June

**88. GOVERNMENT REGULATOR | DISTORTION**

The Department of Veterans Affairs told physicians and scientists of the VA it couldn’t publish studies without approval from political appointees of the president, effectively censoring research and publications. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/01/us-veterans-affairs-agency-doctors-scientists-research>

89. **CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**  
President Trump authorized the National Guard to deploy in Los Angeles, making false claims of violence. Later, this deployment was deemed in violation of the Constitution. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c5ylyd9lkkqo>
90. **CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**  
ICE detained labor activist and SEIU California President David Huerta after he participated in Los Angeles protests supporting immigrant rights. <https://www.newsweek.com/david-huerta-arrested-injured-ice-raids-2082271>
91. **CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS**  
President Trump called peaceful protesters “insurrectionists” as rationale to possibly invoke the Insurrection Act. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/09/us/trump-los-angeles-protestors-insurrectionists.html>
92. **GOVERNMENT THREATS**  
ICE arrested and briefly detained Sen. Alex Padilla during a Department of Homeland Security press conference about immigration raids and protests. Padilla was removed from the press conference, violently shoved to the ground after trying to ask a question and later detained briefly. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/06/12/california-sen-alex-padilla-handcuffed-at-noem-presser-00403253>
93. **MEDIA THREATS**  
The administration fired another 600+ staffers at Voice of America. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/20/trump-administration-voice-of-america-with-latest-terminations>
94. **MEDIA THREATS**  
Vice President J.D. Vance excluded local reporters from a press conference in Los Angeles. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/20/jd-vance-los-angeles-ice-protests>
95. **ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR**  
The administration pressured the president of the University of Virginia to resign. He resigned shortly thereafter. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/27/us/politics/uva-president-resigns-jim-ryan-trump.html>

## July

96. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**  
Sen. Ted Cruz introduced a bill aimed at penalizing nonprofits and “adversaries” funding “violent riots.” <https://www.cruz.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sen-cruz-introduces-bill-targeting-ngos-and-adversaries-funding-violent-riots>
97. **MEDIA THREATS**  
Trump attacked a CNN reporter over reporting he disliked. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/trump-ramped-attacks-cnn-natasha-181203593.html>
98. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS | REGULATOR**  
A State Department official announced that criticism of Israel can result in visa revocations. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/18/us/politics/us-visa-revocations-israel.html>
99. **ACADEMIA | REGULATOR DISTORTION**  
The Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights dismissed thousands of civil-rights investigations, totaling 3,424 complaints dismissed between March 11 and June 27. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/08/education-departments-civil-rights-complaint-dismissals-prompt-concern-from-trump-opponents-00439118>
100. **MEDIA REGULATOR**  
The FCC announced plans to appoint a “bias monitor” to assess if CBS engages in anti-Trump coverage. <https://gizmodo.com/fcc-to-appoint-a-babysitter-to-make-sure-cbs-isnt-anti-trump-2000634566>
101. **ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR**  
The administration renewed pressure against Harvard University, with DHS seeking investigations into foreign students and with challenges against the university’s accreditation. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/09/us/politics/trump-harvard-data-accreditation.html>
102. **GOVERNMENT THREATS | POLICE STATE**  
Homeland Security officials physically removed state officials seeking to ask questions at a Kristi Noem press conference. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/tennessee-three-member-removed-kristi-105829319.html>

103. **MEDIA | GOVERNMENT THREATS**  
Trump threatened to withhold support or endorsements for Republicans who opposed the rescission bill that would defund public media. <https://bsky.app/profile/sahilkapur.bsky.social/post/3ltnjvou6bc23>
104. **GOVERNMENT THREATS**  
Trump urged Texas lawmakers to redraw congressional maps (i.e., engage in partisan gerrymandering — a clear First Amendment violation) so Republicans could maintain their House majority. <https://apnews.com/article/trump-congress-house-republicans-texas-redistricting-d18e8280a32872d9eefcbb26f66a0331>
105. **CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**  
Federal agents used force and fired chemical munitions against protesters at a California farm. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/live/2025/jul/10/us-politics-latest-news-updates-donald-trump-birthright-citizenship-republicans-democrats>
106. **MEDIA THREATS**  
Trump sued Rupert Murdoch and *The Wall Street Journal* for \$10 billion over a story about ties between Trump and Jeffrey Epstein. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c23g5xpggzmo>
107. **MEDIA | CORPORATE REGULATOR**  
The FCC cleared the way for T-Mobile to proceed with two different mergers after the company dropped its own diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/11/business/tmobile-fcc-dei-corporate-america.html>
108. **LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**  
Trump berated a district court judge overseeing Harvard litigation. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/21/trump-harvard-case-judge-00465755>
109. **MEDIA REGULATOR**  
The FCC approved a merger between Paramount and Skydance, agreeing to transfer broadcast licenses for CBS stations to the new owners. This happened after CBS parent company Paramount paid \$16 million to settle the baseless *60 Minutes* lawsuit Trump brought alleging manipulative CBS editing. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jul/24/paramount-skydance-merger-fcc>
110. **MEDIA THREATS**  
The White House removed *The Wall Street Journal* from the Scotland press pool as further retaliation for the Epstein article. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/21/journal-removed-white-house-pool-epstein-00465548>

## August

111. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE | REGULATOR**  
President Trump signed an executive order tasking Defense Secretary Hegseth with establishing “specialized units” in the National Guard, “specifically trained and equipped to deal with public order issues.” <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/08/25/politics/trump-executive-order-national-guard-units-crime>
112. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**  
President Trump authorized the National Guard to deploy in Washington D.C., making false claims of violence. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/10/27/us/us-national-guard-deployments.html>
113. **MEDIA | ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR**  
The Department of Homeland Security announced plans to limit foreign-visa periods for journalists. This also included limits for foreign students. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/28/united-states-moves-to-restrict-visa-length-for-foreign-students-reporters>
114. **CIVIL SOCIETY REMOVAL**  
The administration decided to scale back the White House’s annual human-rights report. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/trump-administration-scale-back-annual-human-rights-reports-rcna223560>
115. **CIVIL SOCIETY | MEDIA POLICE STATE | THREATS**  
Trump claimed that he has the right to do anything he wants following his deployment of the National Guard in Chicago. <https://bsky.app/profile/atrupar.com/post/3lxdalfxrt2z>
116. **CIVIL SOCIETY | GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
The Department of Housing and Urban Development said it would discontinue offering materials in non-English languages. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/18/us/politics/housing-agency-english-material-trump.html>

**117. GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**

The Department of Homeland Security said it didn't keep text data after April 9. (Under the Federal Records Act, government agencies are required to preserve all documentation that officials and federal workers produce while executing their duties, and they have to make federal records available to the public under the Freedom of Information Act unless they fall under certain exemptions.) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/22/us/politics/homeland-security-foia-text-messages.html>

**118. CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS**

The president called for philanthropists George and Alex Soros of the Open Society Foundations to be indicted with RICO charges. <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2025/aug/27/trump-says-leftist-megadonors-george-alex-soros-face-racketeering/>

**119. CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS | REGULATOR**

The president signed an executive order creating an authority for prosecution of individuals who burn the American flag, claiming this could incite riots or violence. This order runs contrary to longstanding Supreme Court precedent. The order encourages the State Department, Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security to refer cases to local authorities and to revoke immigration benefits to people charged. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/08/prosecuting-burning-of-the-american-flag/>

## September

**120. MEDIA THREATS**

President Trump sued *The New York Times*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/16/donald-trump-says-he-is-suing-new-york-times-15bn-lawsuit-against-newspaper-ntwnfb>

**121. MEDIA THREATS | REGULATOR**

The FCC threatened ABC as FCC Chairman Carr said that “we can do this the easy way or the hard way” as a form of pressure to take Jimmy Kimmel off the air. <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/09/18/media/brendan-carr-jimmy-kimmel-fcc-first-amendment>

**122. MEDIA THREATS | REGULATOR**

President Trump said that networks could lose their licenses if they aired negative coverage about him. <https://www.cnn.com/world/live-news/trump-uk-state-visit-09-18-25#cmfpgp3dq00003b6nag9yrp3c>

**123. CIVIL SOCIETY DISTORTION**

National parks and museums removed images and language, including the image of a formerly enslaved Black man with scars on his back. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-says-all-interpretive-signage-national-parks-under-review-2025-09-16/>

**124. MEDIA THREATS | REGULATOR**

The Pentagon required journalists to pledge that they wouldn't publish information about it without receiving official approval. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/20/business/media/pentagon-restrictions-reporters-hegseth-trump.html>

**125. MEDIA THREATS**

President Trump said that critical coverage of him is “really illegal.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/19/us/politics/trump-media-news-free-speech.html>

**126. MEDIA POLICE STATE**

ICE agents shoved a journalist at 26 Federal Plaza in New York City. <https://www.cbsnews.com/newyork/news/ice-officer-journalist-altercation-nyc/>

**127. ACADEMIA THREATS | REGULATOR**

The Department of Education pressured universities for names of students and faculty who have engaged in “alleged antisemitic incidents.” UC Berkeley complied and shared a list. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/12/uc-berkeley-trump-administration-antisemitism>

**128. GOVERNMENT THREATS**

The Pentagon cracked down on social-media posts of troops about Charlie Kirk. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/pentagon-cracks-down-troops-social-media-posts-about-charlie-kirk-2025-09-16/>

**129. ACADEMIA REGULATOR | THREATS**

The White House urged universities to sign a compact with conservative values. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/oct/02/trump-university-funding-compact>



130. **CIVIL SOCIETY DISTORTION**  
The Department of Justice deleted a study from its website showing that domestic terrorists are most often right-wing. <https://www.404media.co/doj-deletes-study-showing-domestic-terrorists-are-most-often-right-wing/>
131. **GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
The White House defunded the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, which had a mandate to oversee the Trump administration. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/30/us/politics/trump-federal-watchdog-funding.html>
132. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE | THREATS**  
ICE threatened to bring federal charges against anyone who “assaults an officer.” <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/16/assault-ice-officer-federal-crime>
133. **GOVERNMENT THREATS**  
U.S. Attorney Erik Siebert, who was tasked with investigating New York Attorney General Letitia James, found insufficient evidence for prosecution. The attorney resigned after Trump said he “wants him out.” <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/19/us-attorney-letitia-james-erik-siebert>
134. **GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
A top federal prosecutor in Sacramento was fired just hours after she reminded the Border Patrol chief to abide by court-ordered restrictions on immigration raids. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/26/us/trump-fires-us-attorney-california-immigration.html>
135. **MEDIA THREATS | REGULATOR**  
FCC Chairman Carr threatened an investigation into television program *The View*. <https://www.newsweek.com/fcc-says-view-could-targeted-next-after-jimmy-kimmel-2132438>
136. **CIVIL SOCIETY DISTORTION**  
The National Park Service removed signs about climate change and Indigenous history. The Interior deputy press secretary said, “Thanks to President Donald Trump, Interior is ensuring that the American people are no longer being fed the lies of the delusional Green New Scam.” <https://www.mainepublic.org/climate/2025-09-25/acadia-national-park-removes-educational-signs-about-climate-change-indigenous-history>
137. **GOVERNMENT REGULATOR | THREATS**  
The FBI fired agents who knelt during racial-justice protests in 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/fbi-fires-agents-pictured-kneeling-during-racial-justice-protest-2020-2025-09-27/>
138. **CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR | THREATS**  
The Department of Justice pushed to investigate the Open Society Foundations following the president’s pressure campaign. This was a major break from decades of past practice meant to insulate the agency from political interference. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/25/us/politics/justice-trump-george-soros-foundation.html>
139. **CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS | REGULATOR | POLICE STATE**  
Trump issued the memorandum “Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence,” which broadly implied that it would treat speech as grounds for law-enforcement action if it tended toward “justifying” violence. That is not the legal requirement under the First Amendment. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/25/trump-presidential-memorandum-political-violence>
140. **CIVIL SOCIETY THREATS | POLICE STATE**  
Trump signed an executive order designating the “antifa” movement as a domestic terrorist group. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/designating-antifa-as-a-domestic-terrorist-organization/>
141. **GOVERNMENT THREATS**  
Trump threatened to fire military leaders if he dislikes them. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-says-he-will-fire-us-military-leaders-if-he-doesnt-like-them-2025-09-30/>
142. **GOVERNMENT THREATS | REGULATOR**  
Former FBI director James Comey was indicted after the president pressured Attorney General Pam Bondi to prosecute him. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/justice-department-charges-james-comey-lying-congress-rcna233581>
143. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR**  
A bill was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives that would give authority to the Secretary of State to strip U.S. citizens of their U.S. passports and citizenship for political speech. <https://truthout.org/articles/new-bill-would-allow-rubio-to-strip-us-citizens-passports-over-political-speech/>

144. **MEDIA THREATS**  
President Trump made verbal threats at a journalist who asked a question. <https://bsky.app/profile/atrupar.com/post/3lyxjkbpkhh26>
145. **MEDIA THREATS**  
Trump told an Australian journalist that he's going to warn the Australian president about the reporter. <https://bsky.app/profile/acyn.bsky.social/post/3lyxj2vzwhm2s>
146. **CORPORATE CAPITULATION**  
YouTube agreed to pay a \$24.5 million settlement for suspending Trump's account after Jan. 6, 2021. This comes after other platforms also settled and paid Trump for the same conduct. X settled for \$10 million and Meta settled for \$25 million. Some or all of these settlements will help pay for the ballroom Trump is building by bulldozing the East Wing of the White House. Some will support conservative trainings and other programs. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9dx46qgp1jo>
147. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**  
President Trump activated the National Guard to deploy in Portland, Oregon, making false claims of violence. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/10/27/us/us-national-guard-deployments.html>

## October

148. **CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**  
President Trump activated the National Guard to deploy in Chicago, making false claims of violence. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2dnk0ee6pyo>
149. **CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR**  
The State Department revoked foreign visas for six individuals over their social-media posts after Charlie Kirk's assassination. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/oct/14/us-foreign-visas-charlie-kirk-social-media>
150. **LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**  
Deputy Chief of Staff and Homeland Security Adviser Stephen Miller attacked an Oregon judge who blocked Trump's use of the military. Miller called the ruling "legal insurrection." <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/5539238-miller-portland-troops-deployment/>
151. **GOVERNMENT THREATS**  
John Bolton, Trump's former national security advisor, was indicted following pressure from the president. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/john-bolton-surrender-authorities-federal-indictment-rcna238146>
152. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE | THREATS**  
ICE threatened federal prosecutions for anyone who "assaults" an officer. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/16/assault-ice-officer-federal-crime>
153. **GOVERNMENT THREATS**  
Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth announced that Pentagon staff cannot speak with Congress without permission and approval. <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/pentagon-tightens-control-communicating-with-us-congress-2025-10-21/>
154. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**  
President Trump activated the National Guard to deploy in Memphis, making false claims of violence. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/10/27/us/us-national-guard-deployments.html>
155. **GOVERNMENT THREATS | DISTORTION**  
A prosecutor who refused pressures from Trump to pursue charges against New York Attorney General Letitia James was fired. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/17/us/politics/trump-prosecutor-fired-letitia-james.html>
156. **GOVERNMENT THREATS | DISTORTION**  
Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. fired a scientist from the National Institutes of Health after she filed a whistleblower complaint. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/oct/03/rfk-jr-jeanne-marrazzo-nih-fired>
157. **GOVERNMENT THREATS | DISTORTION**  
FBI Director Kash Patel fired two bureau agents with excellent performance reviews who had been associates of Jack Smith, a special counsel during the Biden administration. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/08/us/politics/kash-patel-fbi-agents.html>

158. **GOVERNMENT THREATS | DISTORTION**  
Kash Patel fired an agent trainee for displaying the Pride flag. <https://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/news/kash-patel-fires-fbi-agent-trainee-displaying-gay-pride-flag-rcna235306>
159. **GOVERNMENT THREATS**  
Trump called Jack Smith, the former federal prosecutor who indicted Trump, a criminal to be “investigated and put in prison.” <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/trump-calls-jack-smith-criminal-prison-latest-attack-perceived-foes-rcna240468>
160. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY POLICE STATE**  
ICE ramped up surveillance of immigrants and activists that it claims are affiliated with “antifa.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/10/17/ice-surveillance-immigrants-antifa/>
161. **CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR**  
The Department of Education changed rules for Public Service Loan Forgiveness, allowing denial of loan forgiveness if individuals have engaged in “unlawful activities” such as “abetting illegal immigration” or supporting gender transition for minors. <https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5580915-public-service-student-loan-relief-debt-forgiveness/>
162. **CORPORATE THREATS | CAPITULATION**  
Following pressure from the Department of Justice, Apple and Google removed the ICE tracking apps from their app stores. <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/apple-removes-ice-tracking-apps-after-pressure-by-trump-administration-2025-10-03/>
163. **GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
The administration aired videos at airports claiming the government shutdown was the fault of Democrats. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-airs-video-airports-blaming-democrats-shutdown-2025-10-09/>
164. **MEDIA | CIVIL SOCIETY | GOVERNMENT THREATS | POLICE STATE | REGULATOR**  
Stephen Miller threatened that anyone, especially and including the governor of Illinois, could be charged with criminal conspiracy for interrupting ICE activities. <https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/stephen-miller-floats-arresting-jb-010310006.html>
165. **GOVERNMENT THREATS | REGULATOR**  
The Justice Department indicted Letitia James after pressure from the president. James had prosecuted Trump for various criminal actions. <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/ny-attorney-general-letitia-james-trump-opponent-indicted-grand-jury-b-rcna236737>

## November

166. **MEDIA THREATS**  
The White House restricted journalists’ access to the press secretary’s office, which was previously accessible for decades to reporters. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/11/01/business/trump-white-house-press-limits>
167. **CIVIL SOCIETY ACCESS**  
Law enforcement restricted clergy from praying outside Chicago’s Broadview detention facility. <https://religiousliberty.tv/ice-restricts-public-prayer-outside-broadview-facility-prompting-first-amendment-concerns/>
168. **GOVERNMENT DISTORTION**  
The Coast Guard removed “hate incident” language from its policies and lowered the threshold of symbols like swastikas and nooses (which were formerly considered “hate” symbols). These will now be classified as “harassment.” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/11/20/coast-guard-swastika-noose/>
169. **MEDIA THREATS**  
Trump threatened to sue the BBC over how it used footage of Trump’s remarks on Jan. 6, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/11/world/europe/trump-bbc-lawsuit-hurdles.html>
170. **CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR | POLICE STATE**  
The FBI infiltrated a Signal group chat of immigrant-rights activists and court observers. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/21/fbi-signal-group-chat-immigration>
171. **MEDIA THREATS**  
Trump threatened a female reporter, saying “Quiet, Piggy.” <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/18/trump-calls-reporter-piggy-bloomberg>

172. **MEDIA THREATS**  
The president berated longtime CBS White House correspondent Nancy Cordes, asking her “Are you stupid?” after she asked him a question about the shooting of two National Guard agents. <https://www.axios.com/2025/11/29/trump-targets-female-reporters-with-disparaging-rhetoric>
173. **MEDIA THREATS**  
The president said “things happen” (referring to the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi) and called Khashoggi “extremely controversial” while the Saudi prince visited the White House. <https://www.cnn.com/2025/11/18/politics/khashoggi-murder-trump-bin-saudi-crown-prince>; <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/18/trump-bin-salman-visit-jamal-khashoggi>
174. **MEDIA THREATS**  
The president berated ABC News reporter Mary Bruce during a press conference with the Saudi prince after she asked about Jamal Khashoggi. <https://www.axios.com/2025/11/29/trump-targets-female-reporters-with-disparaging-rhetoric>
175. **MEDIA THREATS**  
Trump berated a Bloomberg reporter and asked why the outlet hired her after she asked a question about Tucker Carlson. <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/worst-see-2-moments-trump-095053364.html>
176. **GOVERNMENT THREATS**  
President Trump accused six lawmakers — all former military and intelligence — of sedition for their remarks reminding the military that they do not have to follow illegal orders. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/20/us/politics/trump-democrats-sedition-death-punishment.html>
177. **GOVERNMENT REGULATOR | THREATS**  
Pete Hegseth threatened an investigation into Sen. Mark Kelly for his comments denouncing Trump’s desire to “hang” political opponents. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/24/us/politics/mark-kelly-pentagon-investigation.html>
178. **MEDIA THREATS | REGULATOR**  
FCC Chairman Carr reposted a comment by Trump urging NBC to fire late-night comedy host Seth Meyers. <https://people.com/donald-trump-calls-for-seth-meyers-firing-fcc-chairman-reposts-11850614>
179. **GOVERNMENT THREATS | REGULATOR | DISTORTION**  
The Pentagon and the FBI expanded threats against lawmakers following their remarks reminding the military that they do not have to follow illegal orders. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/25/us/politics/congress-military-video-fbi.html?partner=slack&smid=sl-share>
180. **CIVIL SOCIETY REGULATOR | DISTORTION**  
Solicitor General D. John Sauer misrepresented facts surrounding the National Guard deployment in Chicago, citing Department of Homeland Security officials who misrepresented specific facts about local protests being “violent.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/25/us/trump-supreme-court-national-guard-chicago-errors.html?partner=slack&smid=sl-share>
181. **MEDIA POLICE STATE**  
At least three journalists were targeted and injured while covering a protest in St. Paul, Minnesota. <https://bringmethenews.com/minnesota-news/at-least-three-journalists-injured-by-police-while-covering-st-paul-ice-raid-protests>
182. **LEGAL & JUDICIAL THREATS**  
White House Press Secretary Leavitt called a judge “partisan” after they dismissed a criminal case against James Comey. The judge dismissed the case because she found the prosecutor had been illegally appointed, handpicked to secure the indictments against Comey. <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/11/24/james-comey-letitia-james-cases-lindsey-halligan-00666896>
183. **MEDIA THREATS | DISTORTION**  
The White House launched a Media Bias tracker, mapping outlets, coverage and reporters that are covering news in ways the administration dislikes. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/mediabias/>; <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/29/white-house-media-website-trump>
184. **MEDIA THREATS | REGULATOR**  
Trump called ABC News “fake” and “crappy” and said the FCC chairman might open an investigation into the outlet. <https://bsky.app/profile/atrupar.com/post/3m5wdorhxsx2u>

**185. MEDIA THREATS**

Trump called a female reporter from *The New York Times* “ugly, both inside and out” after the outlet reported on his waning health. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5624887-donald-trump-new-york-times-reporter-criticism/>

## **December**

**186. ACADEMIA | MEDIA REGULATOR**

The University of Alabama suspended two student magazines — one appealing to women, another to Black students — saying they ran afoul of Justice Department guidance on diversity, equity and inclusion programs. <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/02/us/u-of-alabama-student-magazines-dei.html>

*Analysis covers Jan. 20–Dec. 4, 2025.*



# Endnotes

- 1 Madiba K. Dennie, “‘We Took the Freedom of Speech Away’ Is Somehow a Direct Quote From Donald Trump,” *Balls And Strikes*, Oct. 9, 2025, <https://ballsandstrikes.org/law-politics/freedom-of-speech-take-away-flag-burning-trump/>
- 2 “[T]he Obama administration restricted press access and prosecuted government employees who leaked information to reporters. And the George W. Bush administration’s Patriot Act, with its sweeping surveillance powers, laid the groundwork for much of the repression we are seeing now.” See PEN America, “A Five-Alarm Fire for Free Speech,” April 29, 2025, <https://pen.org/report/trump-administration-100-days/#heading-0>
- 3 Scott Clement, Dan Balz and Andrew Ba Tran, “Voters Broadly Disapprove of Trump But Remain Divided on Midterms, Poll Finds,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 2, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/11/02/trump-democrats-poll-post-abc-ipsos/>
- 4 Daniel Hall, “Trump’s Aggressive Actions Against Free Speech Speak a Lot Louder Than His Words Defending It,” *The Conversationist*, April 24, 2025, <https://theconversation.com/trumps-aggressive-actions-against-free-speech-speak-a-lot-louder-than-his-words-defending-it-252706>; See also The American Sunlight Project, “Trump Claims He’s a Champion of Free Speech. He’s Actually Attacking It,” last updated May 27, 2025, <https://americansunlight.substack.com/p/trump-attacks-free-speech>
- 5 Free Press consulted an array of trackers and research reports analyzing aspects of this issue. The Trump Action Tracker, which Professor Christina Pagel of University College London oversees, is one resource we consulted: <https://www.trumpactiontracker.info/>. Other lists include an ABC News tracker on Trump’s political targets: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/list-individuals-including-lisa-cook-targeted-trump-administration/story?id=124968309>. There are several reports on the first 100 days of the administration, including PEN America’s analysis of attacks on free expression: <https://pen.org/report/trump-administration-100-days/#heading-0>; Amnesty International’s chronicle of attacks on human rights: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/president-trumps-first-100-days-attacks-on-human-rights/>; the Committee to Protect Journalists’ chronicle of attacks on the media: <https://cpj.org/special-reports/alarm-bells-trumps-first-100-days-ramp-up-fear-for-the-press-democracy/#Attacks-on-the-U.S.-press-in-2025>; GLAAD’s tracker of attacks on LGBTQIA+ people: <https://glaad.org/trump-accountability-tracker/>; and the Brennan Center for Justice’s tracker of actions to interfere in the next election: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/trump-administrations-campaign-undermine-next-election>.
- 6 “[T]he President’s palpable misunderstanding that the government simply cannot seek retribution for speech he disdains poses a great threat to Americans’ freedom of speech,” wrote Judge William G. Young in the district court ruling *American Association of University Professors v. Rubio*, No. 1:25-cv-10685 (D.Mass) (2025).
- 7 Jamie Saxon, “Alumna And Journalist Maria Ressa on Freedom of the Press and Combating Disinformation,” Princeton University, April 10, 2019, <https://www.princeton.edu/news/2019/04/10/alumna-and-journalist-maria-ressa-freedom-press-and-combating-disinformation>
- 8 Decades before he became president, Trump already revealed a penchant for exaggeration and an obsession with his image. One real-estate financier observed in 1976: “His deals are dramatic, but they haven’t come into being. So far, the chief beneficiary of his creativity has been his public image.” Der Scutt, the prominent architect who designed Trump Tower in Manhattan, said the same year: “He’s extremely aggressive when he sells, maybe to the point of overselling. Like, he’ll say the convention center is the biggest in the world, when it really isn’t. He’ll exaggerate for the purpose of making a sale.” In 1984, *GQ* profiled Trump and quoted him stating that he owned the entire block on Central Park South and Avenue of the Americas. The magazine noted that the two buildings Trump owned in this area likely comprised less than a sixth of the block. Judy Klemesrud, “Donald Trump, Real Estate Promoter, Builds Image as He Buys Buildings,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 1, 1976, archived Oct. 17, 2018, retrieved Oct. 19, 2025, <https://embed.documentcloud.org/documents/2186610-donald-trump-real-estate-promoter-builds-image/?embed=1>; Graydon Carter, “The Secret to Donald Trump’s Success,” *GQ*, May 1, 1984, archived Oct. 28, 2018, retrieved Oct. 19, 2025, <https://www.gq.com/story/donald-trump-gq-profile-graydon-carter>; Jenna Somers, “New Study Reveals Correlation Between Trump’s Repeated Falsehoods and Public Misperceptions,” Vanderbilt University, Sept. 18, 2023, archived Sept. 22, 2023, retrieved Oct. 19, 2025, <https://web.archive.org/web/2023092220708/https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2023/09/18/new-study-reveals-correlation-between-trumps-repeated-falsehoods-and-public-misperceptions/>
- 9 CNN, “Trump’s Ex-Press Secretary Recalls Method of Lying He Taught Her,” Aug. 2, 2023, <https://www.cnn.com/videos/politics/2023/08/02/trump-indictment-2020-election-grisham-jack-smith-ebob-vpx.cnn>

- 10 Glenn Kessler, “Trump Made 30,573 False or Misleading Claims as President. Nearly Half Came in His Final Year,” *The Washington Post*, Jan. 23, 2021, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-fact-checker-tracked-trump-claims/2021/01/23/ad04b69a-5c1d-11eb-a976-bad6431e03e2\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/how-fact-checker-tracked-trump-claims/2021/01/23/ad04b69a-5c1d-11eb-a976-bad6431e03e2_story.html); Juliana Kim and Bobby Allyn, “Tech Moguls Altman, Bezos and Zuckerberg Donate to Trump’s Inauguration Fund,” NPR, Dec. 13, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/12/13/nx-s1-5227874/trump-bezos-zuckerberg-amazon-facebook-open-ai-meta-inauguration-fund>
- 11 Dave Zweifel, “Trump’s Lie Meter Is Running Full Steam,” *The Cap Times*, Jan. 27, 2025, [https://captimes.com/opinion/dave-zweifel/opinion-trumps-lie-meter-is-running-full-steam/article\\_0ff250d0-da75-11ef-8e62-e7ae386ec333.html](https://captimes.com/opinion/dave-zweifel/opinion-trumps-lie-meter-is-running-full-steam/article_0ff250d0-da75-11ef-8e62-e7ae386ec333.html)
- 12 Protect Democracy, “What Is the Big Lie?” Aug. 15, 2023, <https://protectdemocracy.org/work/what-is-the-big-lie/>; John Yang and Saher Khan, “How Powerful Conservatives Pushed the ‘Big Lie’ That The 2020 Election Was Fraudulent,” *PBS News Hour*, April 26, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/how-powerful-conservatives-pushed-the-big-lie-that-the-2020-election-was-fraudulent>
- 13 NPR, “The Jan. 6 Committee and the Spread of the ‘Big Lie,’” June 14, 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/14/1105006342/the-jan-6-committee-and-the-spread-of-the-big-lie>; Luke Broadwater and Alan Feuer, “Jan. 6 Panel Tracks How Trump Created and Spread Election Lies,” *The New York Times*, June 13, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/06/13/us/politics/trump-january-6-hearings-day-2.html>
- 14 BBC, “Capitol Riots Timeline: What Happened on 6 January 2021?” Aug. 2, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-56004916>; *PBS News Hour*, “Janitorial Staff ‘Felt Degraded’ Cleaning Up After Extremists, Rep. Cicilline Said,” Feb. 11, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VI9CW43BkVo>
- 15 Paul M. Barrett, “Spreading The Big Lie: How Social Media Sites Have Amplified False Claims of U.S. Election Fraud,” NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights, September 2022, <https://bhr.stern.nyu.edu/publication/spreading-the-big-lie-how-social-media-sites-have-amplified-false-claims-of-u-s-election-fraud/>
- 16 Brennan Center for Justice, “State Voting Laws,” last updated Oct. 6, 2025, <https://www.brennancenter.org/issues/ensure-every-american-can-vote/voting-reform/state-voting-laws>
- 17 11Alive, “Georgia State Election Board Passes Rule on Hand-Counts of Vote Totals,” Sept. 20, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WazOaECJw&themeRefresh=1>
- 18 False claims about the eating habits of immigrants are not new and have been used throughout history to vilify minority groups. See Maria Ramirez Uribe and Amy Sherman, “‘They’re Eating the Pets’: Trump, Vance Earn PolitiFact’s Lie of the Year for Claims About Haitians,” *PolitiFact*, Dec. 17, 2024, <https://www.politifact.com/article/2024/dec/17/theyre-eating-the-pets-trump-vance-earn-politifact/>
- 19 Wikipedia, “False or Misleading Statements by Donald Trump,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False\\_or\\_misleading\\_statements\\_by\\_Donald\\_Trump](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False_or_misleading_statements_by_Donald_Trump). Notably, Trump and sometimes-ally Elon Musk have gone after Wikipedia in attempts to shut it down altogether. See Sarah Grevy Gotfredsen, “The Right Takes Aim at Wikipedia,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, Jan. 30, 2025, [https://www.cjr.org/the\\_media\\_today/wikipedia\\_musk\\_right\\_trump.php](https://www.cjr.org/the_media_today/wikipedia_musk_right_trump.php); See also Renee DiResta, “The Right-Wing Attack on Wikipedia,” *The Atlantic*, Nov. 11, 2025, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/2025/11/right-wing-attack-wikipedia-bias-musk-cruz/684886/>
- 20 Brian Stelter, “This Infamous Steve Bannon Quote Is Key to Understanding America’s Crazy Politics,” CNN, Nov. 16, 2021, <https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/16/media/steve-bannon-reliable-sources>
- 21 Wikipedia, “False or Misleading Statements by Donald Trump, Second Term,” [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False\\_or\\_misleading\\_statements\\_by\\_Donald\\_Trump#Second\\_term](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False_or_misleading_statements_by_Donald_Trump#Second_term)
- 22 Start Making Sense with Jon Wiener, “Rebecca Solnit on No Kings — Plus, Reforming the LAPD After Rodney King,” *The Nation*, Oct. 22, 2025, <https://redcircle.com/shows/f709226a-c75b-46f5-850e-9e85442c43a7/episodes/e3d70362-3e35-461c-8757-c42426c79b1b>
- 23 The Federal Register shows that Trump had signed 216 executive orders as of Nov. 30, 2025. By comparison, during his first term, he signed 220 executive orders total. In the first 100 days of his second term, Trump signed 143 executive orders (an average of over one per day) — more than any other president had signed in their first 100 days in office. He signed 26 EOs on his first day in office. See John R. Vile, “Executive Orders and the First Amendment,” Free Speech Center at Middle Tennessee State University, last updated Oct. 2, 2025, <https://firstamendment.mtsu.edu/article/executive-orders-and-the-first-amendment/>; See also: Federal Register, “2025 Donald J. Trump Executive Orders,” <https://www.federalregister.gov/presidential-documents/executive-orders/donald-trump/2025>

- 24 The White House, “Restoring Freedom of Speech and Ending Federal Censorship,” Jan. 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/restoring-freedom-of-speech-and-ending-federal-censorship/>
- 25 The White House, “Reevaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid,” Jan. 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/reevaluating-and-realigning-united-states-foreign-aid/>
- 26 Joseph Gedeon, “Trump Administration Almost Totally Dismantles Voice of America With Latest Terminations,” *The Guardian*, June 20, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/jun/20/trump-administration-voice-of-america-with-latest-terminations>
- 27 The White House, “Additional Measures to Combat Anti-Semitism,” Jan. 29, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/additional-measures-to-combat-anti-semitism/>
- 28 Judith Levine, “Trump Is Using Antisemitism as a Pretext for a War on the First Amendment,” *The Guardian*, March 12, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/mar/12/trump-antisemitism-free-speech>
- 29 Quil Lawrence and Alana Wise, “Defense Secretary Hegseth Requires New ‘Pledge’ for Reporters at the Pentagon,” NPR, Sept. 20, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/09/20/g-s1-89713/pentagon-new-strict-guidelines-for-media?ref=pressingissues.org>
- 30 Al-Jazeera, “United States Moves to Restrict Visa Length for Foreign Students, Reporters,” Aug. 28, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/8/28/united-states-moves-to-restrict-visa-length-for-foreign-students-reporters>
- 31 Brian Stelter, “How Brendan Carr, the Attack-Dog FCC Chair, Helped Take Down Jimmy Kimmel with Words, Not Actions,” CNN, Sept. 18, 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/09/18/media/brendan-carr-jimmy-kimmel-fcc-first-amendment>
- 32 Maxine Joselow, “Park Service Is Ordered to Take Down Some Materials on Slavery and Tribes,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 16, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/16/climate/trump-park-service-slavery-photo-tribes.html?ref=pressingissues.org>
- 33 Nanette Asimov, “UC Berkeley Gives Trump Administration 160 Names in Antisemitism Probe,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sept. 11, 2025, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/uc-berkeley-gives-160-names-antisemitism-probe-21043760.php>
- 34 Joseph Gedeon, “US Justice Department Removes Study Finding Far-Right Extremists Commit ‘Far More’ Violence,” *The Guardian*, Sept. 17, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/17/justice-department-study-far-right-extremist-violence?ref=pressingissues.org>
- 35 Joseph Gedeon, “ICE Threatens Federal Assault Charges Against Anyone Who Attacks Its Officers,” *The Guardian*, Sept. 16, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/16/assault-ice-officer-federal-crime>
- 36 Rachel Leingang, “JD Vance Threatens Crackdown on ‘Far-Left’ Groups After Charlie Kirk Shooting,” *The Guardian*, Sept. 15, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/15/jd-vance-charlie-kirk-podcast>
- 37 Nicholas Riccardi and Christine Fernando, “Trump Campaigned as a Protector of Free Speech But Critics Say His Actions Threaten It,” *The Associated Press*, March 12, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/trump-campaigned-as-a-protector-of-free-speech-but-critics-say-his-actions-threaten-it>
- 38 “Trump Has Likely Done More to Undermine Free Speech Than Any U.S. President Since the McCarthy Era,” See Jacob Mchangama, “Who Has Free Speech?” *Foreign Affairs*, Oct. 21, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/who-has-free-speech-jacob-mchangama>
- 39 Justin Spike and Nicholas Riccardi, “Trump’s Moves Against Media Outlets Mirror Authoritarian Approaches to Silencing Dissent,” *PBS News Hour*, Sept. 18, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/trumps-moves-against-media-outlets-mirror-authoritarian-approaches-to-silencing-dissent>
- 40 Reporters Without Borders, “Six Months of Trump’s War on the Press: Importing and Exporting Authoritarian Tendencies,” July 17, 2025, <https://rsf.org/en/six-months-trump-s-war-press-importing-and-exporting-authoritarian-tendencies>
- 41 Veronika Bondaranko, “Trump Keeps Saying ‘Enemy of the People’ — But the Phrase Has a Very Ugly History,” *Business Insider*, Feb. 27, 2017, <https://www.businessinsider.com/history-of-president-trumps-phrase-an-enemy-of-the-people-2017-2>
- 42 Aaron Rupar (@atrupar.com), Bluesky, Sept. 16, 2025, <https://bsky.app/profile/atrupar.com/post/3lyxjkbpkhh26>; Acyn (@acyn.bluesky.social), Bluesky, Sept. 16, 2025, <https://bsky.app/profile/acyn.bsky.social/post/3lyxj2vzwhm2s>

- 43 Jeremy Barr, “Trump Once Again Steps Up Attacks on TV Networks as He Threatens to Revoke Licenses,” *The Guardian*, Nov. 26, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/26/trump-revoke-tv-licenses-threats-media-attacks?>
- 44 Jessica J. González, “How FCC Chairman Carr Has Fueled Trump’s Authoritarian Takeover,” Free Press, March 18, 2025, <https://www.freepress.net/blog/how-fcc-chairman-carr-has-fueled-trumps-authoritarian-takeover>
- 45 Marina Dunbar, “White House Launches Website to Excoriate Media For ‘Biased’ Stories,” *The Guardian*, Nov. 29, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/29/white-house-media-website-trump>
- 46 Scott Nover, “Journalists Come Under Fire Covering L.A. Protests,” *The Washington Post*, June 10, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/style/media/2025/06/09/journalists-injured-la-protests/>; Surina Venkat, “Journalist Arrested During Summer ICE Protests Deported to El Salvador,” *The Hill*, Oct. 3, 2025, <https://thehill.com/policy/international/5538116-mario-guevara-deported-salvador/>
- 47 Protect Democracy, “Protecting Protesters and the Press from Unconstitutional Federal Force in Illinois,” Oct. 6, 2025, <https://protectdemocracy.org/work/protecting-protesters-and-the-press-from-unconstitutional-federal-force-in-illinois/>
- 48 Free Press, “Who Owns the Media?” <https://www.freepress.net/who-owns-media>
- 49 *Trump v. CBS Broadcasting Inc* (2:24-cv-00236) (2024) <https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69332852/trump-v-cbs-broadcasting-inc/>; Katie Fallow, “Paramount’s Trump Lawsuit Settlement: Curtain Call for the First Amendment?” Knight First Amendment Institute, July 9, 2025, <https://knightcolumbia.org/blog/paramounts-trump-lawsuit-settlement-curtain-call-for-the-first-amendment>
- 50 Jeremy Barr, “CBS News Heavily Edits Trump 60 Minutes Interview, Cutting Boast Network ‘Paid Me a Lotta Money,’” *The Guardian*, Nov. 3, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/nov/03/trump-cbs-60-minutes-interview-edited>
- 51 In response to immense public pressures, Disney/ABC eventually reversed their decision to suspend Jimmy Kimmel’s show. See Free Press, “Who Owns the Media?” <https://www.freepress.net/who-owns-media/broadcasting-entertainment/who-owns-media-disney>
- 52 Reporters Without Borders, “Six Months of Trump’s War on the Press: Importing and Exporting Authoritarian Tendencies,” July 17, 2025, <https://rsf.org/en/six-months-trump-s-war-press-importing-and-exporting-authoritarian-tendencies>
- 53 Human Rights Watch, “US: Excessive Force Against LA Protesters,” Aug. 18, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/08/18/us-excessive-force-against-la-protesters>
- 54 Jon Seidel, “Judge Blasts Trump’s Chicago Border ‘Blitz,’ Extends Curbs on Use of Force That ‘Shocks the Conscience,’” *The Chicago Sun Times*, Nov. 6, 2025, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/immigration/2025/11/06/judge-sara-ellis-operation-midway-blitz-tear-gas-deportation-campaign>
- 55 Jon Seidel (@jonseidel.bluesky.social), Bluesky, Nov. 4, 2025, <https://bsky.app/profile/jonseidel.bsky.social/post/3m4sozokqt2w>; See also Nora Benavidez and James Tager, “Arresting Dissent,” PEN America, May 27, 2020, <https://pen.org/report/arresting-dissent/>; Jenna Ruddock, “Prosecutors Are Going to War With Climate Protesters,” *The New Republic*, Sept. 25, 2023, <https://newrepublic.com/article/175615/prosecutors-going-war-climate-protesters>; Roudabeh Kishi and Sam Jones, “Demonstrations and Political Violence in America: New Data for Summer 2020,” ACLED, Sept. 3, 2020, <https://acleddata.com/report/demonstrations-and-political-violence-america-new-data-summer-2020> (“escalating use of force against demonstrators comes amid a wider push to militarize the government’s response to domestic unrest, and particularly demonstrations perceived to be linked to left-wing groups like Antifa, which the administration views as a ‘terrorist’ organization”); Diana Novak Jones, “Top Trump Official Defied Court Order on Tear Gas During Chicago Crackdown, Protesters Say,” Reuters, Oct. 23, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/top-trump-official-defied-court-order-tear-gas-during-chicago-crackdown-2025-10-23/>; Jon Seidel, “Judge Blasts Trump’s Chicago Border ‘Blitz,’ Extends Curbs on Use of Force That ‘Shocks the Conscience,’” *The Chicago Sun Times*, Nov. 6, 2025, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/immigration/2025/11/06/judge-sara-ellis-operation-midway-blitz-tear-gas-deportation-campaign>
- 56 Jon Seidel (@jonseidel.bluesky.social), Bluesky, Nov. 6, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c867gdjl1n1o> (“It doesn’t matter that someone continues to go protest, or continues to be courageous. That is irrelevant as to whether there was a chilling effect.”)
- 57 Alicia Victoria Lozano, “In L.A., Federal Prosecutors Are Charging More Protesters. A Surprising Number of Cases Are Falling Apart,” NBC News, Nov. 8, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/trump-federal-prosecutors-protesters-los-angeles-dismissed-rcna241590>

- 58 Rachel Levinson-Waldman and Naz Balkan, “The Government’s Growing Trove of Social Media Data,” Brennan Center for Justice, July 21, 2025, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/governments-growing-trove-social-media-data>; Nasser Eleedroos and Rachel Levinson-Waldman, “‘Continuous Vetting’ of All Visa Holders Is Impossible, but the Threat Alone Chills Free Speech,” Brennan Center for Justice, Sept. 25, 2025; Eva Dou, “ICE Amps Up Its Surveillance Powers, Targeting Immigrants and Antifa,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 17, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2025/10/17/ice-surveillance-immigrants-antifa/>; Joseph Cox, “ICE and CBP Agents Are Scanning Peoples’ Faces on the Street to Verify Citizenship,” 404 Media, Oct. 29, 2025, <https://www.404media.co/ice-and-cbp-agents-are-scanning-peoples-faces-on-the-street-to-verify-citizenship/>
- 59 Office of Sen. Ted Cruz, “Sen. Cruz Introduces Bill Targeting NGOs and Adversaries Funding Violent Riots,” July 22, 2025, <https://www.cruz.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sen-cruz-introduces-bill-targeting-ngos-and-adversaries-funding-violent-riots>. See also International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, “Evolving Threats to the Tax-Exempt Status of 501(c)(3) Nonprofits,” April 2025, [icnl.org/post/news/evolving-threats-to-the-tax-exempt-status-of-501c3-nonprofits](https://icnl.org/post/news/evolving-threats-to-the-tax-exempt-status-of-501c3-nonprofits)
- 60 Office of Sen. John Kennedy, “Kennedy Introduces Bill to Protect Americans from Ideologically Motivated Violence,” Nov. 6, 2025, <https://www.kennedy.senate.gov/public/press-releases?ID=92AB5450-C051-42C5-85CC-BD25BEC74926>
- 61 Office of Sen. Ted Cruz, “Sen. Cruz Introduces Bill Targeting NGOs and Adversaries Funding Violent Riots,” July 22, 2025, <https://www.cruz.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/sen-cruz-introduces-bill-targeting-ngos-and-adversaries-funding-violent-riots>; Devin Barrett, “Justice Dept. Official Pushes Prosecutors to Investigate George Soros’s Foundation,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 25, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/25/us/politics/justice-trump-george-soros-foundation.html>
- 62 American Oversight, “The Weaponization of the Government Against Civil Society,” June 4, 2025, <https://americanoversight.org/investigation/the-weaponization-of-the-government-against-civil-society/>
- 63 Brian Doherty, “The Worst Parts of Trump’s First 100 Days Involved Ignoring Libertarian Principles,” *Reason*, April 29, 2025, <https://reason.com/2025/04/29/the-worst-parts-of-trumps-first-100-days-involved-ignoring-libertarian-principles/>; Emma Camp, “Trump Administration Admits ICE Arrested Mahmoud Khalil Without a Warrant,” *Reason*, April 28, 2025, <https://reason.com/2025/04/28/trump-administration-admits-ice-arrested-mahmoud-khalil-without-a-warrant/>
- 64 J.D. Tuccille, “Immigrants and Radicals Have the Same Free Speech Rights as Everyone Else,” *Reason*, May 2, 2025, <https://reason.com/2025/05/02/immigrants-and-radicals-have-the-same-free-speech-rights-as-everyone-else/>
- 65 George Chidi, “Journalist Mario Guevara Deported to El Salvador After 100 Days in ICE Custody,” *The Guardian*, Oct. 3, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/oct/03/journalist-mario-guevara-ice-deportation>; Mandy Taheri, “Journalist Mario Guevara, Detained While Reporting, Deported to El Salvador,” *Newsweek*, Oct. 4, 2025, <https://www.newsweek.com/journalist-mario-guevara-detained-while-reporting-deported-to-el-salvador-10829287>; Michael Sainato, “ICE Detains British Journalist After Criticism of Israel on US Tour,” *The Guardian*, Oct. 26, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/oct/26/ice-detains-british-muslim-journalist-laura-loomer>
- 66 Grace Eliza Goodwin, “British Journalist Sami Hamdi Detained by US Authorities,” BBC, Oct. 28, 2025, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c867gdj1n1o>; Advancing Justice, “Yaa’kub Ira Vijandre, Filipino-American Journalist and Activist Wrongfully Detained by ICE, Files Habeas Petition Seeking Immediate Release,” Oct. 27, 2025, <https://www.advancingjustice-atlanta.org/news/vijandre>
- 67 Gabe Kaminsky, Madeleine Rowley and Maya Sulkin, “The ICE Detention of a Columbia Student Is Just the Beginning,” *The Free Press*, March 10, 2025, <https://www.thefp.com/p/the-ice-detention-of-a-columbia-student>; Emma Camp, “Trump Administration Admits ICE Arrested Mahmoud Khalil Without a Warrant,” *Reason*, April 28, 2025, <https://reason.com/2025/04/28/trump-administration-admits-ice-arrested-mahmoud-khalil-without-a-warrant/>
- 68 Jacob Sullum, “Rümeysa Öztürk’s Op-Ed Is Still the Only Public Justification for Her Arrest,” *Reason*, April 30, 2025, <https://reason.com/2025/04/30/rumeysa-ozturks-op-ed-is-still-the-only-public-justification-for-her-arrest/>
- 69 American Association of University Professors, “Court Rules in Favor of the AAUP in Ideological Deportation Case,” Sept. 30, 2025, <https://www.aaup.org/about/programs/legal-program/aaup-litigation/court-rules-favor-aaup-ideological-deportation-case>
- 70 *American Association of University Professors v. Rubio*, No. 1:25-cv-10685 (D.Mass) (Sept. 30, 2025)
- 71 Alex Woodward and Madeline Sherratt, “Trump’s Counterterrorism Czar Says Kilmar Abrego Garcia’s Supporters Could Be Charged With ‘Aiding and Abetting,’” *The Independent*, April 17, 2025, <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/sebastian-gorka-kilmar-abrego-garcia-activists-b2735153.html>
- 72 Lubna Kably, “Hundreds of International Students Wake Up to an Email Asking Them to Self Deport for Campus Activism,” *The Times of India*, March 29, 2025, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/hundreds-of-international-students-are-waking-up-to-an-email-asking-them-to-self-deport-for-campus-activism-or-even-sharing-posts-on-social-media/articleshow/119679695.cms>



- 73 Aaron Reichlin-Melnick (@ReichlinMelnick), X, March 19, 2025, [https://x.com/reichlinmelnick/status/1902433630598918401?s=12&t=\\_WbYD8Qa8m865\\_ha1tWf7g](https://x.com/reichlinmelnick/status/1902433630598918401?s=12&t=_WbYD8Qa8m865_ha1tWf7g)
- 74 Nick Bednar, "The Return of Schedule F," Lawfare, May 19, 2025, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/the-return-of-schedule-f>
- 75 Kevin Bodargus, "Inside EPA's Hunt for Employees Who Signed the Dissent Letter," E&E News by Politico, Oct. 30, 2025, <https://www.eenews.net/articles/inside-epas-hunt-for-employees-who-signed-the-dissent-letter/>
- 76 Megan Mineiro, "Trump Administration Defunds Federal Watchdog Office," *The New York Times*, Sept. 30, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/30/us/politics/trump-federal-watchdog-funding.html>
- 77 Victoria Ebner, Rebecca Shabad, Michael Kosnar, Chloe Atkins and Peter Alexander, "John Bolton Pleads Not Guilty to Charges of Mishandling Classified Information" NBC News, Oct. 17, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/john-bolton-surrender-authorities-federal-indictment-rcna238146> ; Ryan J. Reilly, Michael Kosnar, Adam Reiss and Chloe Atkins, "Grand Jury Indicts New York Attorney General Letitia James, a Trump Opponent, on Bank Fraud Charges," NBC News, Oct. 9, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/ny-attorney-general-letitia-james-trump-opponent-indicted-grand-jury-b-rcna236737>
- 78 Ed Pilkington, "RFK Jr. Fires Top NIH Scientist Weeks After She Files Whistleblower Complaint," *The Guardian*, Oct. 3, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/oct/03/rfk-jr-jeanne-marrazzo-nih-fired>; Reuters, "Pentagon Tightens Control on Staff Communication With US Congress," Oct. 21, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/pentagon-tightens-control-communicating-with-us-congress-2025-10-21/> ; Heather Knight and Hamed Aleaziz, "Trump Fired a U.S. Attorney Who Insisted on Following a Court Order," *The New York Times*, Sept. 26, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/26/us/trump-fires-us-attorney-california-immigration.html> ; Alan Feuer, Tyler Pager and Devlin Barrett, "Prosecutors Who Rejected Trump's Pressure to Charge James Is Fired," *The New York Times*, Oct. 17, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/17/us/politics/trump-prosecutor-fired-letitia-james.html>
- 79 Karen Yourish, Annie Daniel, Saurabh Datar, Isaac White and Lazaro Gamio, "These Words Are Disappearing in the New Trump Administration," *The New York Times*, March 7, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/07/us/trump-federal-agencies-websites-words-dei.html>
- 80 A court found the administration violated a previous court order on FEMA grants, with the White House requiring cooperation with federal immigration enforcement as a condition for receiving assistance. See Reuters, "US Court Rules Trump Violated Order by Placing Conditions on FEMA Grants," Oct. 14, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/14/us-court-rules-trump-violated-order-by-placing-conditions-on-fema-grants>; Law enforcement defy court order preventing them from teargassing protesters. See Diana Novak Jones, "Top Trump Official Defied Court Order on Tear Gas During Chicago Crackdown, Protesters Say," *The Chicago Sun Times*, Oct. 13, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/top-trump-official-defied-court-order-tear-gas-during-chicago-crackdown-2025-10-23/>
- 81 Brian Doherty, "The Worst Parts of Trump's First 100 Days Involved Ignoring Libertarian Principles," *Reason*, April 29, 2025, <https://reason.com/2025/04/29/the-worst-parts-of-trumps-first-100-days-involved-ignoring-libertarian-principles/>
- 82 Michael C. Bender, Alan Blinder and Jonathan Swan, "Inside Trump's Pressure Campaign on Universities," *The New York Times*, April 14, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/14/us/politics/trump-pressure-universities.html>; American Oversight, "The Weaponization of the Government Against Civil Society," June 4, 2025, <https://americanoversight.org/investigation/the-weaponization-of-the-government-against-civil-society/>
- 83 Josh Moody, "Columbia Agrees to Trump's Demands," Insider Higher Ed, March 21, 2025, [https://www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/executive-leadership/2025/03/21/columbia-agrees-trumps-demands?utm\\_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm\\_campaign=12e723d4ab-BNU\\_20230517\\_COPY\\_01](https://www.insidehighered.com/news/governance/executive-leadership/2025/03/21/columbia-agrees-trumps-demands?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=12e723d4ab-BNU_20230517_COPY_01)
- 84 Miranda Jeyaretnam, "What to Know About Trump's Funding 'Compact' for Colleges," *TIME*, Oct. 14, 2025, <https://time.com/7325448/trump-higher-education-universities-compact-dei-gender-academic-federal-funding/> ; Connor Greene, "The Seven Colleges That Rejected Trump's 'Compact,' and Two Still Weighing the Proposal," *TIME*, Oct. 21, 2025, <https://time.com/7327437/trump-universities-compact-federal-funding/>
- 85 Lisa Fazio and Brendan Nyhan, "Trump Sent a 'Compact' to Our Universities. They Should Reject This Devil's Bargain," MSNBC, Oct. 6, 2025, <https://www.msnbc.com/opinion/msnbc-opinion/trump-compact-universities-colleges-free-speech-rcna236003>
- 86 Prem Thakker and Pablo Manriquez, "Marco Rubio Personally Signed Off to Detain Mahmoud Khalil on 'Foreign Policy Grounds,' Sources Confirm," Zeteo, March 11, 2025, <https://zeteo.com/p/marco-rubio-personally-signed-off>

- 87 Eileen AJ Connelly, “Organizers Cancel a University Conference on Censorship After Being Warned It Could Run Afoul of Utah Law Unless It Was Censored. Yes, You Read that Right,” PEN America, Oct. 24, 2025, <https://pen.org/organizers-of-a-university-conference-on-censorship-had-to-cancel-after-being-told-the-content-likely-would-have-run-afoul-of-utah-law-unless-it-was-censored-yes-you-read-that-right/>; Ray Sanchez, “‘Rules Aren’t Clear Anymore’: Trump Crackdown on Student Protesters Sends Shock Waves Across US universities,” CNN, March 16, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/03/16/us/mahmoud-khalil-columbia-protests-free-speech/>; Sara Custer, “Campus Censorship Puts American Soft Power at Risk,” Inside Higher Ed, Oct. 23, 2025, <https://www.insidehighered.com/opinion/columns/editors-note/2025/10/23/campus-censorship-puts-american-soft-power-risk>
- 88 The White House, “Preventing Abuses of the Legal System and the Federal Court,” March 22, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/03/preventing-abuses-of-the-legal-system-and-the-federal-court/>
- 89 Peter Stone, “US Judges Who Rule Against Trump Are Being Barraged With Abuse and Threats, Experts Warn,” *The Guardian*, May 17, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/17/trump-judges-courts-threats>
- 90 Megan Messerly and Kyle Cheney, “Trump Calls for Impeachment of Judge Who Tried to Halt Deportations,” Politico, March 18, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/18/trump-impeachment-judge-deportations-00235173>
- 91 Ashleigh Fields, “Miller on Judge Blocking Portland National Guard Deployment: ‘Legal Insurrection,’” *The Hill*, Oct. 4, 2025, <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/5539238-miller-portland-troops-deployment/>
- 92 Free Press, “Who Owns the Media,” <https://www.freepress.net/who-owns-media>
- 93 Noam Scheiber, “Why Corporate America Is Caving to Trump,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 26, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/26/business/trump-disney-paramount-shareholder-capitalism.html>
- 94 Kanishka Singh and Jaspreet Singh, “Apple Removes ICE Tracking Apps After Pressure by Trump Administration,” Reuters, Oct. 3, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/apple-removes-ice-tracking-apps-after-pressure-by-trump-administration-2025-10-03/>
- 95 Free Press, “Who Owns the Media?” <https://www.freepress.net/who-owns-media>; Noam Scheiber, “Why Corporate America Is Caving to Trump,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 26, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/26/business/trump-disney-paramount-shareholder-capitalism.html>
- 96 Free Press, “Who Owns the Media?” <https://www.freepress.net/who-owns-media>; Max Matza, “YouTube to Pay \$24.5m to Settle Trump Lawsuit Over Capitol Riot,” BBC, Sept. 29, 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c9dx46qgp1jo>
- 97 *New York Times* Opinion, “The ‘Recklessness Itself Sends a Message’: 35 Legal Experts Assess Trump’s Return,” April 28, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/28/opinion/trump-constitution-rule-of-law.html>
- 98 Republican experts warned about this leading up to the 2024 election. See Peter Stone, “Trump’s Threats to ‘Go After’ Opponents Will Subvert Rule of Law, Experts Warn,” *The Guardian*, Sept. 20, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2024/sep/20/trump-election-opponents-threats>
- 99 Shay Dvoretzky, Parker Rider-Longmaid, Avia M. Dunn, Rachel Turow and Steven Marcus, “Rolling Back the Administrative State: Understanding Trump’s Deregulatory Initiative,” Skadden, Feb. 25, 2025, <https://www.skadden.com/insights/publications/2025/02/rolling-back-the-administrative-state>; Josh Boak, “Trump Seeks Greater Control of Independent Regulators With His New Executive Order,” *The Associated Press*, Feb. 19, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-order-agency-independent-regulator-b3f13291374d91491a13f164b402f51b>
- 100 Department of Homeland Security, “Statement from a DHS Spokesperson on Directives Expanding Law Enforcement and Ending the Abuse of Humanitarian Parole,” Jan. 21, 2025, <https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/01/21/statement-dhs-spokesperson-directives-expanding-law-enforcement-and-ending-abuse>; David Folkenflik, “Trump’s FCC Chief Opens Investigation into NPR and PBS,” NPR, Jan. 30, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/30/nx-s1-5281162/fcc-npr-pbs-investigation>; U.S. Department of Education, “U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights Sends Letters to 60 Universities Under Investigation for Antisemitic Discrimination and Harassment,” March 10, 2025, <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-educations-office-civil-rights-sends-letters-60-universities-under-investigation-antisemitic-discrimination-and-harassment>; Lexi Lonas Cochran, “High-Profile ICE Arrests of Tufts, Alabama Students Spotlight Growing Trump Sweep,” *The Hill*, March 27, 2025, <https://thehill.com/homenews/education/5218410-ice-arrests-tufts-alabama-students-trump-immigration-crackdown-rumeyssa-ozturk-khalil/>; Leonie Chao-Fong, “Pam Bondi Rescinds Biden-Era Protections for Journalists,” *The Guardian*, April 25, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/25/pam-bondi-journalists-subpoenas>; Rebecca Beitsch and Brett Samuels, “White House ‘Actively Looking’ at Suspending Habeas Corpus in Immigration Crackdown,” *The Hill*, May 9, 2025, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5292820-white-house-miller-immigration-crackdown/>; Zach Montague, “State Dept. Official Says Criticism of

- Israel Can Lead to Visa Revocations,” *The New York Times*, July 18, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/18/us/politics/us-visa-revocations-israel.html>; Peter Alexander, Michael Kosnar, Chloe Atkins, Zoë Richards and Alexandra Bacallao, “Former FBI Director James Comey Indicted Following Pressures from Trump,” NBC News, Sept. 25, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/justice-department-charges-james-comey-lying-congress-rcna233581>; Reuters, “Pentagon Tightens Control on Staff Communication with US Congress,” Oct. 21, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/pentagon-tightens-control-communicating-with-us-congress-2025-10-21/>
- 101 U.S. Department of Education, “U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights Sends Letters to 60 Universities Under Investigation for Antisemitic Discrimination and Harassment,” March 10, 2025, <https://www.ed.gov/about/news/press-release/us-department-of-educations-office-civil-rights-sends-letters-60-universities-under-investigation-antisemitic-discrimination-and-harassment>
- 102 Robert Mackey, “Trump Blocks Grant Funding for Harvard Until It Meets President’s Demands,” *The Guardian*, May 5, 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/05/trump-harvard-grants>
- 103 Bianca Quilantan, Rebecca Carballo and Juan Perez Jr., “Education Department Dismisses Thousands of Civil Rights Complaints at an ‘Unheard of’ Pace,” Politico, July 8, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/08/education-departments-civil-rights-complaint-dismissals-prompt-concern-from-trump-opponents-00439118>
- 104 Miranda Jeyaretnam, “What to Know About Trump’s Funding ‘Compact’ for Colleges,” *TIME*, Oct. 14, 2025, <https://time.com/7325448/trump-higher-education-universities-compact-dei-gender-academic-federal-funding>
- 105 Eileen Sullivan, “Here Is How Trump Moved to Seal the Southern Border on Day 1,” *The New York Times*, Jan. 22, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/22/us/politics/trump-border-asylum-explainer.html>
- 106 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, “DHS Strengthens Integrity in Nation’s Immigration System, Returns to Commonsense Legal Immigration Levels,” Nov. 13, 2025, <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/dhs-strengthens-integrity-in-nations-immigration-system-returns-to-commonsense-legal-immigration>
- 107 Prem Thakker and Pablo Manriquez, “Marco Rubio Personally Signed Off to Detain Mahmoud Khalil on ‘Foreign Policy Grounds,’ Sources Confirm,” Zeteo, March 11, 2025, <https://zeteo.com/p/marco-rubio-personally-signed-off>
- 108 Ian F. Blair, “The United Police State of America Has Arrived,” *The Intercept*, Oct. 4, 2025, <https://theintercept.com/2025/10/04/united-police-state-of-america/>; Steve Corbin, “Is the U.S. Heading to a Police State? Trump Executive Orders and Project 2025 Raise Alarms,” *The Fulcrum*, July 21, 2025, <https://thefulcrum.us/ethics-leadership/trump-police-state>
- 109 Joe Sommerlad, “Pete Hegseth to Set Up National Guard ‘Quick Reaction Forces’ to Quell Unrest Across All 50 States,” *The Independent*, Oct. 30, 2025, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/national-guard-rapid-response-forces-hegseth-trump-b2855190.html>
- 110 Ari Berman, “Project 2026: Trump’s Plan to Rig the Next Election,” *Mother Jones*, September–October issue, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2025/09/donald-trump-plan-to-rig-2026-midterm-elections-voter-suppression-gerrymandering-certification/>
- 111 Ibid.
- 112 Roudabeh Kishi and Sam Jones, “Demonstrations and Political Violence in America: New Data for Summer 2020,” ACLED, Sept. 3, 2020, <https://acleddata.com/report/demonstrations-and-political-violence-america-new-data-summer-2020>
- 113 Tom Dreisbach, “Criminal Records of Jan. 6 Rioters Pardoned by Trump Include Rape, Domestic Violence,” NPR, Jan. 30, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/01/30/nx-s1-5276336/donald-trump-jan-6-rape-assault-pardons-rioters>
- 114 Nora Benavidez, *Big Tech Backslide*, Free Press, December 2023, <https://www.freepress.net/big-tech-backslide-how-social-media-rollbacks-endanger-democracy-ahead-2024-elections>; Nora Benavidez, *Empty Promises*, Free Press, October 2022, <https://www.freepress.net/policy-library/empty-promises-inside-big-techs-weak-effort-fight-hate-and-lies-2022>
- 115 Nora Benavidez, *Big Tech Backslide*, Free Press, December 2023, <https://www.freepress.net/big-tech-backslide-how-social-media-rollbacks-endanger-democracy-ahead-2024-elections>; Free Press, “Who Owns the Media?” <https://www.freepress.net/who-owns-media>
- 116 Free Press, “Who Owns the Media?” <https://www.freepress.net/who-owns-media>; Heidi Beirich and Wendy Via, “Democracies Under Threat,” *The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism*, March 2021, <https://globalextrémism.org/reports/democracies-under-threat/>

- 117 A court found the administration violated a previous court order on FEMA grants, with the White House requiring cooperation with federal immigration enforcement as a condition for receiving assistance. See Reuters, “US Court Rules Trump Violated Order by Placing Conditions on FEMA Grants,” Oct. 14, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/10/14/us-court-rules-trump-violated-order-by-placing-conditions-on-fema-grants>; Diana Novak Jones, “Top Trump Official Defied Court Order on Tear Gas During Chicago Crackdown, Protesters Say,” *The Chicago Sun Times*, Oct. 13, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/top-trump-official-defied-court-order-tear-gas-during-chicago-crackdown-2025-10-23/>
- 118 African American Policy Forum, *Anti-Blackness Is the Point: Racism, Misogyny and Donald Trump’s Assault on Equal Opportunity*, October 2025, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PGDX4A3\\_zxhrxzRqvQcarZ3nJlq9Zggl/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1PGDX4A3_zxhrxzRqvQcarZ3nJlq9Zggl/view)
- 119 Zachary Cohen, Alayna Treene and Hadas Gold, “‘Good Luck With That.’ Trump Administration Terminates Privacy Officials at Agency Overseeing Government Hiring and Firing,” CNN, Feb. 18, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/18/politics/opm-privacy-team-fired/index.html>
- 120 Karen Yourish, Annie Daniel, Saurabh Datar, Isaac White and Lazaro Gamio, “These Words Are Disappearing in the New Trump Administration,” *The New York Times*, March 7, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2025/03/07/us/trump-federal-agencies-websites-words-dei.html>
- 121 Hillel Italie, “What’s Happening With the Institute of Museum and Library Services After Trump’s Executive Order,” The Associated Press, March 20, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/institute-doge-musk-museum-library-services-executive-order-trump-30ebde013ce3e9f97e2f4af72c869c0b>
- 122 Zachary Cohen, Alayna Treene and Hadas Gold, “‘Good Luck With That.’ Trump Administration Terminates Privacy Officials at Agency Overseeing Government Hiring and Firing,” CNN, Feb. 18, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/02/18/politics/opm-privacy-team-fired/index.html>; Aishvarya Kavi and Edward Wong, “Workers at Wilson Center Put on Leave as Trump Seeks Shutdown,” *The New York Times*, April 3, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/03/us/politics/wilson-center-shutdown-musk.html>
- 123 Bianca Quilantan, Rebecca Carballo and Juan Perez Jr., “Education Department Dismisses Thousands of Civil Rights Complaints at an ‘Unheard of’ Pace,” Politico, July 8, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/07/08/education-departments-civil-rights-complaint-dismissals-prompt-concern-from-trump-opponents-00439118>; Megan Mineiro, “Trump Administration Defunds Federal Watchdog Office,” *The New York Times*, Sept. 30, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/30/us/politics/trump-federal-watchdog-funding.html>
- 124 Austin Gaffney, “Government Science Data May Soon Be Hidden. They’re Racing to Copy It,” *The New York Times*, March 21, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/21/climate/government-websites-climate-environment-data.html> (*The New York Times* reported in March that in the first two months of the administration, hundreds of terabytes of digital resources analyzing data have been taken off government websites: “While in many cases the underlying data still exists, the tools that make it possible for the public and researchers to use that data have been removed.”)
- 125 Minho Kim, “Homeland Security Tells Watchdog It Hasn’t Kept Text Message Data Since April,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 22, 2025; updated Aug. 24, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/22/us/politics/homeland-security-foia-text-messages.html>
- 126 Rebecca Beltsch and Brett Samuels, “White House ‘Actively Looking’ at Suspending Habeas Corpus in Immigration Crackdown,” *The Hill*, May 9, 2025, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5292820-white-house-miller-immigration-crackdown/>
- 127 The Editorial Board, “Trump’s Spending Abuses Are Out of Control,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 14, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/14/opinion/trump-congress-spending-power.html>
- 128 *60 Minutes*, “Law Professor’s Study Finds Courts’ Growing Concern with DOJ Cases,” Oct. 19, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/2RMqaMQIHKo>
- 129 Ibid.; See also Devon Lum, Mattathias Schwartz, Christoph Koettl and Ainara Tiefenthäler, “Times Analysis Finds Errors in Trump’s Supreme Court Filing That Calls for National Guard in Chicago,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 25, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/25/us/trump-supreme-court-national-guard-chicago-errors.html>
- 130 Devin Ombres, “The President and Constitutional Violations: Will the Federal Courts Contain the President’s Power Grabs?” The Center for American Progress, May 20, 2025, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-president-and-constitutional-violations-will-the-federal-courts-contain-the-presidents-power-grabs/>
- 131 Jon Seidel, “Judge Blasts Trump’s Chicago Border ‘Blitz,’ Extends Curbs on Use of Force That ‘Shocks the Conscience,’” *The Chicago Sun Times*, Nov. 6, 2025, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/immigration/2025/11/06/judge-sara-ellis-operation-midway-blitz-tear-gas-deportation-campaign>



- 132 Cory Turner, “Judge Says Education Dept. Partisan Out-of-Office Emails Violated First Amendment,” NPR, Nov. 8, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/11/08/nx-s1-5602859/education-department-out-of-office-emails-ruling>
- 133 Anna Griffin, “Judge Permanently Blocks National Guard Deployments to Portland for ICE Protests,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 7, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/07/us/politics/portland-oregon-national-guard.html>
- 134 Lawrence Hurley and Chloe Atkins, “Federal Judge Criticizes Trump Over Free Speech in Ruling for Student Protesters,” NBC News, Sept. 30, 2025; updated Oct. 1, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/trump-administration/federal-judge-criticizes-trump-free-speech-ruling-student-protesters-rcna234744>
- 135 Devin Ombres, “The President and Constitutional Violations: Will the Federal Courts Contain the President’s Power Grabs?” The Center for American Progress, May 20, 2025, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-president-and-constitutional-violations-will-the-federal-courts-contain-the-presidents-power-grabs/>
- 136 David Folkenflik, “Judge Freezes Trump Plan to Dismantle Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty,” NPR, March 26, 2025, <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/26/nx-s1-5341321/trump-radio-free-europe-radio-liberty-restraining-order>; Michael M. Grynbaum, “Trump Refiles His \$15 Billion Defamation Lawsuit Against *The New York Times*,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 17, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/17/business/media/trump-lawsuit-new-york-times.html>; Jacob Knutson, “DOJ Appeals Ruling Against Trump Order Targeting Law Firm for Election Work,” *Democracy Docket*, June 30, 2025, <https://www.democracymarket.com/news-alerts/justice-department-trump-executive-order-perkins-coie-appeal/>; Kerry Flynn and Sara Fischer, “Trump’s Media and Defamation Lawsuits This Year Tie Record,” *Axios*, July 22, 2025, <https://www.axios.com/2025/07/22/trump-lawsuits-wsj-npr-pbs>; American Association of University Professors, “Court Rules in Favor of the AAUP in Ideological Deportation Case,” Sept. 30, 2025, <https://www.aaup.org/about/programs/legal-program/aaup-litigation/court-rules-favor-aaup-ideological-deportation-case>
- 137 These cases include rulings on the detention and deportation of Kilmar Abrego Garcia, use of the Alien Enemies Act, and the firing of FTC Commissioner Rebecca Slaughter. See Devin Ombres, “The President and Constitutional Violations: Will the Federal Courts Contain the President’s Power Grabs?” The Center for American Progress, May 20, 2025, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-president-and-constitutional-violations-will-the-federal-courts-contain-the-presidents-power-grabs/>; Amy Howe, “Supreme Court Permits Trump’s Firing of FTC Commissioner to Remain in Place,” *SCOTUSblog*, Sept. 8, 2025, <https://www.scotusblog.com/2025/09/supreme-court-permits-trumps-firing-of-ftc-commissioner-to-remain-in-place/>
- 138 Ibid.
- 139 Columbia University Law Professor David Pozen explains: “The depth and breadth of this administration’s disregard for civil liberties, political pluralism, the separation of powers and legal constraints of all kinds mark it as an authoritarian regime.” *New York Times* Opinion, “The ‘Recklessness Itself Sends a Message’: 35 Legal Experts Assess Trump’s Return,” April 28, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/28/opinion/trump-constitution-rule-of-law.html>; Jacob Mchangama of Vanderbilt University’s Future of Free Speech has explained that “Trump has likely done more to undermine free speech than any U.S. president since the McCarthy era.” See Jacob Mchangama, “Who Has Free Speech?” *Foreign Affairs*, Oct. 21, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/who-has-free-speech-jacob-mchangama>
- 140 Daniel Hall, “Trump’s Aggressive Actions Against Free Speech Speak a Lot Louder Than His Words Defending It,” *The Conversationist*, April 24, 2025, <https://theconversation.com/trumps-aggressive-actions-against-free-speech-speak-a-lot-louder-than-his-words-defending-it-252706>
- 141 Todd Spangler, “Defeat the Press: How Donald Trump’s Attacks on News Outlets Undermine the First Amendment,” *Variety*, July 16, 2025, <https://variety.com/2025/biz/news/donald-trump-attacks-news-media-first-amendment-1236460374/>
- 142 Reporters Without Borders, “2024 World Press Freedom Index — Journalism Under Political Pressure,” 2024, <https://rsf.org/en/2024-world-press-freedom-index-journalism-under-political-pressure>; World Justice Project, Rule of Law Index, 2024, <https://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index/global/2024/United%20States/historical>; CBS News, “European Thinktank Adds U.S. to List of ‘Backsliding’ Democracies for 1st Time,” Nov. 22, 2021, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/us-backsliding-democracy-list-idea-thinktank-global-democracies/>
- 143 Economic Intelligence Agency, “EIU’s 2024 Democracy Index: Trend of Global Democratic Decline and Strengthening Authoritarianism Continues Through 2024,” Feb. 27, 2025, <https://www.eiu.com/n/democracy-index-2024/>
- 144 Reuters, “US Democratic Backsliding Under Trump Encourages Autocrats Globally, Democracy Watchdog Says,” Sept. 11, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-democratic-backsliding-under-trump-encourages-autocrats-globally-democracy-2025-09-11/>



- 145 Thomas Carothers and Benjamin Press, “Understanding and Responding to Global Democratic Backsliding,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Oct. 20, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2022/10/understanding-and-responding-to-global-democratic-backsliding?lang=en>
- 146 Freedom House, “The Mounting Damage of Flawed Elections and Armed Conflict,” 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2024/mounting-damage-flawed-elections-and-armed-conflict>
- 147 James Dean, “Democratic Decline a Global Phenomenon, Even in Wealthy Nations,” Cornell Chronicle, Jan 17, 2024, <https://news.cornell.edu/stories/2024/01/democratic-decline-global-phenomenon-even-wealthy-nations>
- 148 Zach Beauchamp, “How Trump Will Hide His Anti-Democratic Politics in Plain Sight,” Vox, Jan 22, 2025, <https://www.vox.com/on-the-right-newsletter/396127/trump-democracy-executive-orders-day-one>. Consider how President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey has undone decades of human-rights protections for women and the LGBTQIA+ community and has also hollowed out democratic institutions over the course of his 18 years in power. See Human Rights Watch, “Turkey: Erdoğan’s Onslaught on Rights and Democracy,” March 14, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/24/turkey-erdogans-onslaught-rights-and-democracy>. Consider also how Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz-KDNP government of Hungary have limited independent news coverage while enabling investors who share political sympathies with the party to take over the media. Orbán exploited the COVID pandemic to solidify power, declaring a state of danger that has continued to undermine freedom of expression and pluralism in news reporting. See Human Rights Watch, “‘I Can’t Do My Job As a Journalist’: The Systematic Undermining of Media Freedom in Hungary,” Feb. 13, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/13/i-cant-do-my-job-journalist/systematic-undermining-media-freedom-hungary>
- 149 Human Rights Watch, “‘We Can’t See the Sun’: Malaysia’s Arbitrary Detention of Migrants and Refugees,” March 5, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/03/05/we-cant-see-sun/malaysias-arbitrary-detention-migrants-and-refugees>; Human Rights Watch, “Human Rights Watch Submission to the Universal Periodic Review of Egypt, 48th Session of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review; 4th Cycle,” July 15, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/15/human-rights-watch-submission-universal-periodic-review-egypt>; Human Rights Watch, “Thailand: ‘Swap Mart’ Targets Foreign Dissidents,” May 15, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/05/15/thailand-swap-mart-targets-foreign-dissidents-refugees>
- 150 Margaret Satterthwaite, “Safeguarding the Independence of Judicial Systems in the Face of Contemporary Challenges to Democracy: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers,” United Nations Human Rights Council, June 21, 2024, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4063180?ln=ar&v=pdf>
- 151 Megan Messerly and Kyle Cheney, “Trump Calls for Impeachment of Judge Who Tried to Halt Deportations,” Politico, March 18, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/18/trump-impeachment-judge-deportations-00235173>
- 152 Margaret Satterthwaite, “Safeguarding the Independence of Judicial Systems in the Face of Contemporary Challenges to Democracy: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers,” United Nations Human Rights Council, June 21, 2024, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/4063180?ln=ar&v=pdf>
- 153 András Pethő, “Trump’s Attempts to Muzzle the Press Look Familiar,” *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2025, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2025/03/trumps-press-freedom-hungary-orban/682060/>
- 154 Free Press, “Defeating Authoritarianism: How People and Media Can Stand Up for Freedom Now,” Feb. 27, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/live/OOIOSFtHKbQ?si=OvAR3vUNTxNSJvzx>
- 155 Christopher Shay, Erica Chenoweth, Jeremy Pressman and Soha Hammam, “The Resistance Reaches into Trump Country,” Harvard Kennedy School, Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation, Oct. 16, 2025, <https://ash.harvard.edu/resources/the-resistance-reaches-into-trump-country/>
- 156 Samuel Moyn, “Resistance to Trump Isn’t Enough,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 31, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/31/opinion/trump-presidency-congress-resistance.html>
- 157 Julie Bosman, “ICE Is Cracking Down on Chicago. Some Chicagoans Are Fighting Back,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 14, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/14/us/chicago-ice-trump.html>
- 158 Jay Stanley, “Civil Rights Movement Is a Reminder That Free Speech Is There to Protect the Weak,” ACLU, May 26, 2017, <https://www.aclu.org/news/free-speech/civil-rights-movement-reminder-free-speech-there-protect-weak>; National Museum of African American History and Culture, “The 1964 Civil Rights Act Turns 50,” (2014) <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/1964-civil-rights-act-turns-50>
- 159 Robert Cohen, “The Free Speech Movement at Sixty and Today’s Unfree Universities,” *Academe Magazine*, Winter 2025, <https://www.aaup.org/academe/issues/winter-2025/free-speech-movement-sixty-and-todays-unfree-universities>

- 160 Nora Benavidez, *Big Tech Backslide*, Free Press, December 2023, <https://www.freepress.net/big-tech-backslide-how-social-media-rollbacks-endanger-democracy-ahead-2024-elections>
- 161 Darren Walker, “With Four Freedoms, Four Responsibilities” Ford Foundation, Winter 2018, <https://www.fordfoundation.org/news-and-stories/big-ideas/with-four-freedoms-four-responsibilities/with-the-freedom-of-speech-the-responsibility-to-listen/>
- 162 Summer Lopez, “Trump’s Lawsuit Against Book Publisher Is a Dangerous Escalation,” *The Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 19, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2025-09-19/trump-lawsuit-penguin-random-house-new-york-times>
- 163 American Bar Association, “Bar Organizations’ Statement in Support of the Rule of Law,” March 26, 2025, <https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/aba-news-archives/2025/03/bar-organizations-statement-in-support-of-rule-of-law/>
- 164 Lawyers Defending American Democracy, *How State Bars Can Defend Democracy and the Rule of Law Consistent with Keller v. State Bar of California*, Sept. 12, 2022; updated Jan. 16, 2024 <https://ldad.org/letters-briefs/keller>
- 165 Free Press, “Organizing Against Authoritarianism: A Toolkit for the People,” <https://www.freepress.net/policy-library/organizing-against-authoritarianism-toolkit-people>
- 166 Protect Democracy, “The Authoritarian Playbook,” June 15, 2022, <https://protectdemocracy.org/work/the-authoritarian-playbook/>; Neha Ahmed, “Pulling the Alarm: From Washington to Rome, Experts Warn of Rapid Democratic Decline,” Democratic Erosion Consortium, Oct. 19, 2025, <https://democratic-erosion.org/2025/10/19/pulling-the-alarm-from-washington-to-rome-experts-warn-of-rapid-democratic-decline/>
- 167 Mathias Risse, “Safeguarding Democracy: Free Speech as a Human and Civil Right,” Harvard Kennedy School, Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights, Oct. 6, 2025, <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/centers/carr-ryan/our-work/carr-ryan-commentary/safeguarding-democracy-free-speech-human-and-civil>
- 168 Leah Hunt-Hendrix and Astra Taylor, *Solidarity*, Penguin Random House, 2025
- 169 Free Press consulted an array of trackers and research reports analyzing aspects of this issue. The Trump Action Tracker, which Professor Christina Pagel of University College London oversees, is one resource we consulted: <https://www.trumpactiontracker.info/>. Other lists include an ABC News tracker on Trump’s political targets: <https://abcnews.go.com/US/list-individuals-including-lisa-cook-targeted-trump-administration/story?id=124968309>. There are several reports on the first 100 days of the administration, including Amnesty International’s chronicle of attacks on human rights: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/04/president-trumps-first-100-days-attacks-on-human-rights/>; the Committee to Protect Journalists’ chronicle of attacks on the media: <https://cpj.org/special-reports/alarm-bells-trumps-first-100-days-ramp-up-fear-for-the-press-democracy/#Attacks-on-the-U.S.-press-in-2025>; GLAAD’s tracker of attacks on LGBTQIA+ people: <https://glaad.org/trump-accountability-tracker/>; and the Brennan Center for Justice’s tracker of actions to interfere in the next election: <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/trump-administrations-campaign-undermine-next-election>

# CHOKEHOLD

Donald Trump's War on Free Speech  
& the Need for Systemic Resistance

