

Over 5,000 sign WSWS petition against Google blacklisting

By Trévon Austin
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In August, the *World Socialist Web Site* launched an online petition against Google's blacklisting of left-wing, progressive and anti-war websites and platforms, including the WSWS. More than 5,000 people from all over the world have now signed the petition, and support for the WSWS campaign in defense of free speech continues to grow.

In April, Google's vice president of engineering, Ben Gomes, announced that Google had changed its search engine algorithm to promote more "authoritative content" and weed out so-called "fake news." This was in the midst of the neo-McCarthyite campaign against Russia, accused without any factual verification of meddling in the 2016 US election campaign and spreading social and political unrest by means of false information. This campaign, backed by the US intelligence agencies and spearheaded by the Democratic Party and allied news outlets such as the *New York Times*, has increasingly been directed toward cracking down on social media such as Google, Facebook and Twitter, as part of an attack on free speech.

Google's actions resulted in precipitous declines in search traffic for leading left-wing websites, especially the *World Socialist Web Site*. Thirteen sites that regularly publish left-wing or anti-war content have seen their search traffic from Google decline by an average of 55 percent, with the *World Socialist Web Site* experiencing a 74 percent decline.

News platforms such as *Salon* and *RT*, and even the *New York Times*, have in recent days quoted members of the WSWS editorial board and cited information published by the WSWS documenting the drastic decline in referrals since Google implemented its censorship program. In an October 18 article, *RT* wrote that "critical news sources are now at risk of being

censored by internet companies working in league with nefarious US government intelligence."

The same day, *Salon* published an article headlined "'Fake news' or free speech: Is Google cracking down on left media?" The article quoted WSWS writer Andre Damon as saying, "The universality of it makes it clear that this is deliberate. Our view is that there should be a free and open exchange of ideas."

Democratic Senators Mark Warner and Amy Klobuchar introduced a bill last Thursday requiring "online platforms to make reasonable efforts to ensure that foreign individuals and entities are not purchasing political advertisements in order to influence the American electorate."

This, combined with Google's blacklisting, represents a clear attempt by the ruling class to attack freedom of information on the Internet. Google has still not responded to the allegations brought forth by the WSWS, including in an August 25 open letter addressed to top company executives and written by David North, the chairperson of the WSWS International Editorial Board.

Escalating its attack on left media, Google has also begun to remove websites and particular journalists from Google News. As reported by the WSWS last Friday, a search for *World Socialist Web Site* on news.google.com did not return a single recently published article. Chris Hedges, whom David North recently interviewed on Google's censorship, told the WSWS that his articles have ceased to appear as well.

Since then, Google News has added a small selection of articles from the WSWS and Chris Hedges, possibly in response to the *World Socialist Web Site's* exposé, but the vast majority remain excluded.

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality

(IYSSE) have been engaged in a campaign against Internet censorship since August. The broad and passionate response from workers, students and youth in the United States and internationally is indicative of widespread opposition to censorship and attacks on democratic rights.

Michael A. from Sydney, Australia stated, “The breakdown of capitalism is seeing the world spiral closer towards WW3 between nuclear armed powers. The working class is facing attacks on democratic rights. The attacks on the WSWS and other left-wing sites by Google underscores the savage attempts to suppress any antiwar opposition and stop the working class not only realising the imminent danger but that there is also an alternative.”

Jesse B. wrote that “wsws.org is a reputable and accurate source for both news and historical analysis. That Google is restricting its traffic on the claim that is a ‘fake news’ site is slanderous as well as criminal.”

Marcus D. said, “The billionaires who own Google are terrified of workers learning what genuine socialism is. This monopoly collects the most detailed information about its users’ lives and shares it with the intelligence agencies, while simultaneously asserting that they have the right to decide what people can and can’t read. Google’s censorship must stop!”

John T. from the United Kingdom stated, “I regard the WSWS as the most reliable source of intelligent news and analysis. The increasing dangers of imperialist war and financial collapse means that the international working class is in desperate need of such a resource as the WSWS represents. We should do all we can to ensure its continued availability.”

Jeremy E. from Michigan wrote, “While I do not agree with all of the points of the *World Socialist Web Site*, I am against Google (who holds a majority share of control over how people access information on the Internet) deliberately censoring a lawful website.”

WSWS journalist Andre Damon said, “The widespread support for the WSWS campaign to oppose Google’s censorship of left-wing sites makes clear the overwhelming opposition throughout the world to Internet censorship. We will continue to press forward with this fight.”

The WSWS urges all readers and supporters of democratic rights to sign the petition demanding an end to Google censorship and to share it on social media.

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>