



## Musk/X Officially Targeted by EU for Israel “Hate Speech”

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**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** One of the most important trends of 2023 is how many different countries and governments have enacted new laws that give them the power to censor online and to force and coerce big tech platforms upon pain of punishment of law to coerce in accordance with their agenda, with accordance with their dictates. We've seen laws enacted in Canada and the UK, we've seen laws pending in democracies such as Ireland and Brazil, which we've covered extensively. And probably the most pernicious of all of those laws is the one that was enacted back in August by the EU called the Digital Services Act, which allows EU regulators to fine any social media platforms 6% of their overall revenue, not 6% of their profits, 6% of their gross revenue in the event that they find that those platforms are not doing enough to censor what EU regulators regard as disinformation or hate speech. You can only imagine, it's not hard to imagine, what EU regulators regard as disinformation, anything that is contrary to their policies on things like COVID, the war in Ukraine, the war in Israel, essentially anything, especially their elections, which they are very desperate to control, to ensure that populist governments such as the one governing Hungary, such as the new government in Slovakia, where the prime minister who won, ran on a platform of cutting off aid to the war in Ukraine to ensure that they can control the outcome of elections as well. That is their primary objective in wanting to censor, but essentially it's to ensure there's no dissent to their policies, to the policies of Brussels, to the policies of EU elites, and they have yet to initiate any formal investigation under this law. They've been repeatedly threatening to do so. The minute war between Israel and Gaza broke out, they immediately threatened Twitter, Facebook and Google that they weren't doing enough to censor anti-Israel content or what they called pro-Hamas propaganda and disinformation. In other words, they demanded big tech platforms censor more to protect Israel or else be punished with massive fines under this new law.

And today, the EU actually initiated its first formal investigation. They chose Elon Musk's X in order to capitalise on how much political opposition there is to Musk among the Centrist and the left Liberals that compose the Western establishment animosity to Musk due to the fact that he's refused to censor on command the way the other platforms have, and they know that he's therefore politically vulnerable and they decided to initiate this investigation specifically, explicitly on the ground that he's not censoring enough to protect Israel. The EU is supporting Israel in its war against Gaza, as it usually does, and they decided to exploit this issue as the grounds for saying that Musk is being reckless; in fact breaking the law by not censoring enough. They first exploited this war for these ends five days after the Hamas attack. Here was AP on October 12th, 2023, we reported this at the time as well. *EU asks Musk's X for information on hate speech and, quote, 'illegal content' related to Israel-Hamas war.* So they knew as soon as this war broke out, as soon as Hamas attacked Israel, that this was an excellent opportunity for them to exploit, to claim that they were just trying to protect Israel, that they need censorship powers and that they need to punish acts for failing to censor enough to protect Israel. They weren't doing it for some leftwing cause, they were doing it for a cause that a lot of conservatives support. Obviously, the pro-Israel case is something very important to people across the ideological spectrum, but certainly a lot of people on the Western right in the American right are fanatical supporters of Israel, so they were very clever in implying that they were censoring in order to protect Israel. Quote, "The European Commission on Thursday made a formal, legally binding request for information from Elon Musk's social media platform X over its handling of hate speech, misinformation and violent terrorist content related to the Israel-Hamas war. It is the first step in what could become the EU's inaugural investigation under the Digital Services Act, in this case to determine if the site formerly known as Twitter is in compliance with the tough new rules meant to keep users safe online and stop the spread of harmful content."

Don't worry, they're not trying to censor. They're not trying to suppress dissent. It's trying to keep users safe through censorship. Quote, "Since the war erupted, photos and videos have flooded social media of the carnage, including haunting footage of Hamas fighters taking terrified Israelis hostage, alongside posts from users pushing false claims and misrepresenting videos from other events. The conflict is one of the first major tests for the EU's groundbreaking digital rules, which took effect in August". "Breton fired off a similar letter Thursday to TikTok, telling CEO Shou Zi Chew that he has a, quote, 'particular obligation' to protect child and teen users from, quote, 'violent content depicting hostage taking and other graphic videos' reportedly making the rounds on the video sharing app." When the EU threatened both TikTok and Twitter, they picked the two most politically polarising platforms, knowing that there'd be a lot of people on their side in doing so, Thierry Breton went to Twitter to announce the following quote, "The DSA, the Digital Services Act, is here to protect both freedom of expression and our democracies – including times of crisis. We have sent X a formal request for information, a first step in our investigation to determine compliance with the DSA".

Now even before the enactment of this act, they have been threatening Elon Musk. Whenever Elon Musk would say things like, We've freed the bird, meaning we're no longer going to have censorship on Twitter, this French censor on behalf of the EU would come and say the bird will only fly in accordance with our rules. They've been telling him for a long time, we in the EU are not going to allow the kind of free speech that you are vowing to usher in. Here is the EU Commission, the formal letter they sent on October 12th. They didn't even wait a week to exploit this massive attack. Five days into it, they were sending this request: *The Commission sends requests for information to X under the Digital Services Act\**. Quote, "Today, the European Commission services formally sent X a requests for information under the DSA. This request follows indications received by the Commission services of the alleged spreading of illegal content and disinformation" – no, illegal content and disinformation – "in particular the spreading of terrorist and violent content and hate speech. The request addresses compliance with other provisions of the DSA as well". Now, this is why I have been spending so much time and so much energy warning people on the right who claim that they support free speech, not to endorse the idea that colleges and American authorities and institutions ought to be censoring in the name of barring terrorists ideas, because when you do that, you're going to be handing people like the EU and Homeland Security and Canadian officials and British officials and Brazilian officials and Irish officials, the weapons to use against you. They've been using the censorship regime against anti-establishment voices on both the right and the left, they will continue to do so. So by suddenly turning around and cheering the censorship regime in the rationale that accompanies that: Oh, we need to suppress calls for violence against Israel, our calls for violence against Jews are terrorist speech, you're fortifying the system. They're now using your arguments to justify the censorship regime that they want to impose. Do you think they're going to confine it only to anti-Israel speech?! They're doing that on purpose to generate more support for it than they would if they started with the left wing cause. But they're going to go right back to censoring the way they've always have been with much stronger weapons in hand as a result of how many people have been demanding this.

Here is Thierry Breton today, December 18th, announcing very proudly, quote, "Today we open formal infringement proceedings against X". And then he lists the alleged violations of the law that X has committed: Suspected breach of obligations to counter illegal content and disinformation. So they have in mind this idea that they can identify what disinformation is. About a month ago, there was an article in the Washington Post about a study that the EU commissioned that determined that X was also allowing too much pro-Russian disinformation. And when we dissected the study as we did for you, what we found was exactly what we expected to find, which was that the outside company they commissioned to identify, quote unquote, "disinformation" was a group of self-proclaimed disinformation experts funded by the neoliberal billionaire Pierre Omidyar, who's obsessed with Russiagate and by pro-Russia disinformation, all they meant was people who are opposed to the war in Ukraine. They defined it as people whose views align with the Russian government. And obviously, if you're against the war in Ukraine, if you're against Western funding of the war in

Ukraine, then automatically it means that you are guilty of pro-Russian disinformation. And obviously when they say anti-Israel propaganda or pro-Hamas propaganda, they're going to classify that as well as anyone who is opposed to the Western arming and financing of the Israeli war.

Now, here is a tweet that Elon Musk posted in response to the announcement from Thierry Breton that the EU is now formally investigating X for failure to censor enough anti Israel material – it was not nearly as defiant as you would expect from Elon Musk. There you see it: "Are you taking action against other social media? Because if you have those issues with this platform, and none are perfect, the others are much worse". Now, you can see in this tone of voice that Elon Musk is using, it's very kind of non-confrontational. And it's surprising he's speaking to an EU official, the chief censor who's been threatening Twitter for over a year with punishments for not censoring enough. And usually Elon Musk is very defiant. Here he's on the defensive. Why? You see him saying, we're not perfect, we know we've not done enough, but you are also going to do this against other platforms because they're much worse. The reason he's being so defensive is because the accusation here isn't that he's allowing too much reach on free speech on COVID or that he is allowing too much free speech on Ukraine or too much free speech on January 6th, or Trump or Russiagate, where he would be all defiant and say, we believe in free speech. No, here they're accusing him of not censoring enough anti-Israel content. And he's very sensitive about this. Remember, he got accused of being an anti-Semite for weeks and then he flew to Israel and pledged to Netanyahu all of his support. He mouthed and recited almost every pro-Israel bromide as a way of getting out of being accused of anti-Semitism. And then he announced new censorship policies on the platform where you weren't allowed to say "from the river to the sea" or "decolonial Israel", on the grounds that that's now genocidal. He gets very defensive when the accusation is, he's not doing enough to protect Israel.

That was what made so clever on the part of the EU that they decided to initiate this investigation explicitly by accusing him of not doing enough to protect Israel, hence his defensive posture. And it produced headlines like this one from the British Telegraph: *EU launches an investigation into Elon Musk's X over Hamas propaganda*. "Social network under fire for failing to counter misinformation and violent content." So this is the headline they want. This is the framework they want. Not that they're charging Elon Musk a failure to censor in order to protect left liberal causes. Instead, they're charging him with failure to censor anti-Israel content. And what we've seen is there was a lot of support among conservatives in the United States and in Europe for censorship, for censoring Israel criticisms. We've seen them demanding that on campuses. We've seen them demanding that when Ron DeSantis banned a pro-Palestinian student organisation from existing in the University of Florida system on the grounds that it gives material support to Hamas, even though it does nothing but express its views. There's been a censorship craze over the last few months and much of it has been supported by American conservatives, the very ones who have been claiming to be in favour of free speech for years, who would normally denounce

the EU, but they're framing this as a censorship campaign to protect Israel. Quote, "The European Commission has opened a formal investigation into Elon Musk's Twitter over its alleged dissemination of misinformation and propaganda related to Hamas." "The commission announced that it had launched a full probe into Twitter, now known as X, to see whether it had broken new EU rules governing online services. The investigation is the first under the Digital Services Act, a sweeping set of laws for social networks and search engines, which came into force in August and can impose massive fines on companies seen to break the law. It comes two months after EU internal market commissioner Thierry Breton wrote to Mr. Musk asking him to crack down on, quote, 'the spreading of terrorist and violent content and hate speech' on the site. It launched a preliminary investigation in October. The opening of formal proceedings allows the EU to impose interim measures on X, such as changes to its algorithms or stricter monitoring of illegal content."

Now, when they say illegal content, what they mean is anything they deem to be disinformation or hate speech. And we've seen how much that's abused. Do you see how grave this is? The EU is now able to make changes to act upon pain of having them pay fines that are astronomical. That's where the censorship regime has arrived. Quote, "X has come under fire since Hamas attacked Israel on October 7 for failing to counter misinformation and violent content in the social network. Mr. Musk himself has been accused of fuelling anti-Semitism by endorsing a conspiracy theory, and major advertisers have boycotted the service after their adverts were found next to pro-Nazi material." Do you see how this war is being used to justify greater authoritarian powers in the hands of officials all throughout the world? Every crisis, every perceived crisis is used this way now. Oh, this is too dangerous to allow unfettered speech to thrive; COVID and January 6th and Russiagate and the 2020 election, and the war in Ukraine, all were used to elevate and escalate censorship powers. And now they're using this war in Israel to do so as well. Only they know that in the West, the way to become a popular censorship movement, to incur a lot of support from people who would otherwise have scorn for EU regulators, is to claim that they're doing it to curb pro-terrorist or pro-Hamas or anti-Israel speech. And there are so many people playing into this in a way that will be extremely self-destructive. The problem is once you cheer a censorship regime once, you lose all credibility to cheer it in the future when, as is inevitable, it is turned back against you. And the people who are cheering this are likely going to be the ones paying the biggest price.

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