

## State Department Blasts European Free Speech Constraints

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The U.S. State Department has publicly criticized Europe's recent online speech regulations, calling them "Orwellian" and warning that they suppress dissent and democratic expression. This marks a notable escalation in American diplomacy under the Trump administration and raises questions about the future of transatlantic relations.

In a post on official channels, the State Department accused European governments of prosecuting thousands of individuals for criticizing their own leaders. The release targeted the European Union's Digital Services Act, alleging the legislation shields European politicians from public scrutiny. The statement declared: "Censorship is not freedom," vowing not to be misled by what it described as an authoritarian move against free speech.

This intervention reinforces earlier critiques by Vice President JD Vance, who charged Europe with "retreating from fundamental values" and likened EU speech rules to a return to Soviet-era suppression. He asserted that democratic institutions that fear their voters offer little protection to their people.

Separately, FCC Chair Brendan Carr and Secretary of State Marco Rubio have expressed similar concerns. Rubio's office recently introduced new visa-restriction policies aimed at foreign officials believed to be involved in censoring U.S.-based content. Under these measures, such individuals would be denied entry into the United States.

The State Department has also dispatched senior envoys to France and Ireland to raise concerns about free speech and digital censorship. These visits echo a broader initiative under Rubio to ensure that allies align with American principles around digital freedom. Critics argue these moves may strain diplomatic ties and divert resources from other international priorities.

Within the department, Rubio has also dismantled a specialized unit focused on countering foreign information manipulation, citing overreach and excessive spending. The closure signals a shift away from

interventionist democracy promotion and toward defending natural rights and free expression, especially within allied nations.

Conservative voices in Washington support the department's stance, framing it as a defense of free speech and an assertion of values shared with traditional allies. They view the visa restrictions and public admonishments as necessary tools to pressure democratic governments to respect individual liberties.

However, European officials have expressed concern. Some warn that these criticisms are politically motivated and risk undermining trust between the United States and its partners. They emphasize that Europe's regulations are intended to combat hate speech and illegal content, not silence dissent.

As the U.S. continues to push back, the diplomatic tug-of-war over free speech regulation may set the tone for future engagement with the EU on broader issues such as trade, security, and digital governance.