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news

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Elon Musk's X, formally Twitter, has been banned in Brazil by a unanimous decision of the Federal Supreme Court (STF). A vote was initiated by Judge Alexandre de Moraes after Musk failed to appoint a new legal representative in the country.

The social media app has come under fire for failing to cooperate in the fight against accounts spreading misinformation online.

During Bolsonaro's time in office, the country faced a "pandemic" of fake news [1] that continues to this day. Many right-wing voters spread misinformation online that ended up having serious negative effects.

One of the most striking examples of this is how the country struggled to combat anti-vaccine movements, and in many cases, the then-president gave speeches defending points made by fake news, such as defending the use of hydroxychloroquine as a form of early treatment for coronavirus [2], without any evidence that it worked. The coronavirus pandemic killed 713,026 people in Brazil [3].

Alexandre de Moraes ordered the suspension of several right-wing X accounts that were accused of spreading disinformation and were under investigation, to which Elon Musk responded by saying:

Elon hypocritically defends "freedom of speech" whilst banning accounts that he doesn't like [4] or that are critical of him [5]. He has never truly stood for "freedom of speech", but instead, like many others, he uses it as an excuse to defend that he should be allowed to say whatever he wants, but will abandon this principle if it relates to an opinion or critique he doesn't like.

Musk did not comply with the order to appoint a new legal representative in the country, which led to the social media platform being shut down.

The campaign against far-right activity online was intensified after a failed coup attempt by right-wing voters in January 2023, which was largely organised via social media and based on fake news.

Elon Musk's Starlink company also had its assets frozen until it would comply with the judge's orders to block X in Brazil. The company initially resisted and stated it wouldn't comply, but later reverted this decision [6].

The STF is far from being a left-wing, pro-labour tribunal. This was clearly demonstrated when it voted to suspend the constitutional minimum spending on healthcare [7].

Elon Musk's defence of freedom of speech is not as unwavering as he makes it out to be. He has a history of complying with censorship requests or modifying X to comply with a country's local laws.

"By 'free speech,' I simply mean that which matches the law", he said in an interview with CNN. [8]

Elon seems to decide when to be a "defender of free speech" or when to submit to "oppressive dictatorships" depending on the circumstances and what would benefit

him most.

It's not enough to punish billionaires working for Western imperialism for not complying with national laws. Brazil is simply trying to deal with some specific right-wing accounts, its problem isn't with the struggle against capitalism, chauvinism, racism, fascism etc in general; banning X is not a real attempt to combat the far-right and free itself from foreign intervention. Even as the Brazilian government distances itself from Western imperialist influence, it is strengthening its ties with China (as we have written about before).

A Western billionaire is being punished, but the country will remain under the influence of others. For the Brazilian working class to be truly free to determine its own path, free from the clutches of foreign and national capitalists, it must build its own strong and rationally planned socialist state. This task can only be accomplished under the leadership of a truly revolutionary communist party.

When we talk about freedom of the press or freedom of speech, we must always ask "for whom and for what?" Although in many of today's societies it is loudly proclaimed they stand for freedom of speech, can we really say that there is freedom for the working masses when all the new platforms and social media sites are owned by billionaires? This is freedom for the capitalist only. True freedom of expression and of the press can only come when these platforms belong to the proletariat and serve its interests.

"For the bourgeoisie, freedom of the press meant freedom for the rich to publish and for the capitalists to control the newspapers, a practice which in all countries, including even the freest, produced a corrupt press. For the workers' and peasants' government, freedom of the press means liberation of the press from capitalist oppression, and public ownership of paper mills and printing presses; equal right for public groups of a certain size (say, numbering 10,000) to a fair share of newsprint stocks and a corresponding quantity of printers' labour." —V.I. Lenin. Collected Works. Progress Publishers: 1972, pp. 283-284

With a socialist state, social media and other news sources would be free of capitalist influence that seeks to undermine workers and national sovereignty. It would be a place for people to interact without constant predatory advertising, without misinformation, and without one's data being collected by private companies that want to profit from selling it or using it against their users.

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[1] [BdF — "'Pandemia de fake news' dificulta combate ao coronavírus no Brasil, alertam especialistas"](#) — 30/10/2021

[2] [BBC Brasil — "A história de Bolsonaro com a hidroxicloroquina em 6 pontos: de tuítes de Trump à CPI da Covid"](#) — 21/05/2021

[3] [Brazilian Ministry of Health — "Coronavirus Brasil"](#) — Updated 02/09/2024

[4] [The New York Times — "Twitter Suspends Over 25 Accounts That Track Billionaires' Private Planes"](#) — 14/12/2022

[5] [Forbes — "Elon Musk Accused Of 'Silencing His Critics' As X Suspends Journalists"](#) — 09/01/2024

[6] [The Guardian — "Elon Musk's Starlink backtracks to comply with Brazil's ban on X"](#) — 04/09/2024

[7] Agência Brasil — “Barroso confirma decisão de suspender piso nacional de enfermagem” — 09/09/2022

[8] CNN — “Elon Musk says Twitter has ‘no actual choice’ about government censorship requests” — 29/05/2023

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