

Did Trump 'fix' TikTok? Users report censorship after outage

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TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew attended Trump's inauguration on Jan. 20. Notably, Trump was flanked by tech billionaires like Mark Zuckerberg, Jeff Bezos, and Nazi-saluting Elon Musk.

On Jan. 19, after a 12-hour outage, TikTok resumed service for its U.S. users, but many noticed what they believe to be a shift in their experience. Shortly after regaining access on Sunday, creators began posting videos expressing concerns that the platform's recommendation algorithm felt different.

Some users claimed they were no longer seeing the types of videos typically suggested to them, while others reported issues with their primary feed, search function, and comments, alleging potential censorship. Posts highlighting these changes have garnered millions of likes.

On X, [@AlexNaivety](#) declared: "TikTok is dead. 'Free Palestine' is now considered a symbol of hate speech."

Some speculated that the shutdown involved a system jigger to make changes demanded by Donald Trump.

At Trump's inauguration

TikTok is owned by ByteDance, a Chinese company, but it operates independently, with its headquarters in Singapore. The Chinese government does not own TikTok. The Singapore-born and Harvard-trained CEO, Shou Zi Chew, attended Trump's inauguration, sitting next to Tulsi Gabbard, Trump's pick for national intelligence director.

When the platform came back online, U.S. users were greeted with a message crediting its return to Trump: "As a result of President Trump's efforts, TikTok is back in the U.S.!"

Shortly after taking office on Jan. 20, the president issued the order to delay the app's ban for 75 days. Trump announced on Truth Social that the executive order "extends the period of time before the law's prohibitions take effect, so that we can make a deal."

During a press briefing on Jan. 20, Trump said that he envisions either Tesla CEO Elon Musk or Oracle Chairman Larry Ellison as potential buyers of TikTok.

Tech imperialism

TikTok's success and its ability to compete with U.S.-based social media giants like Facebook and Instagram made it a target. The TikTok ban is part of a broad effort to assert control over a highly successful global platform that operates outside U.S. corporate ownership.

Some call it "tech imperialism," with the foreign-owned platform being forced to either turn over ownership or be banned. Compelling a foreign company to sell its U.S. operations has never been done before.

The action against TikTok comes amid what many describe as a "New Cold War" by the U.S. against China. TikTok, with its massive user base and cultural influence, became an especially prominent target.

Washington is actively targeting Chinese tech companies that are gaining global prominence and influencing technology standards. This is evident in actions taken against Huawei's 5G infrastructure, TikTok's social media platform, and efforts to restrict China's access to advanced semiconductor technology. Tech imperialism indeed.

