

Can US media survive being gagged by Trump?

Published: January 13, 2026, 10:17 am

Trump's turning on the mainstream media in the US. Much of it is to be banned from the White House. How can US democracy survive this attack, and those that are bound to follow?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zEsBCerut7w?si=_1nLW7zEYt8DUN7R

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=iq9x3-181eb1a-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

Trump is marching on the freedom of the press in the USA and I find that deeply troubling.

What we now know is that after all his years of calling the press all sorts of names, he is beginning to take action to limit its freedoms.

One of the ways in which the press has functioned in the USA is to hold the President to account. This role of the press is absolutely fundamental to the working of a

democracy. Without a press that can have access to the people in power and ask them whatever questions they want, and then freely report the answers, with discussion of those answers being permitted, there is no such thing as a functioning democracy.

But what we now know is that without any consultation or any prior announcement, Donald Trump's press secretary has told the press pack who attend the White House, that they will no longer be invited if they do not say what Donald Trump approves of.

Trump is trampling all over the freedom of the press, and as a consequence over the right to freedom of speech in the USA.

Now, there is nothing that should surprise us about this. Trump is after all a fascist, and what he's doing is straight out of the fascist playbook.

The fascists do not like freedom of the press. It is in fact the very last thing that they want. Controlling the media through propaganda - and that's exactly what fascists rely upon - is central to their work of trying to subvert freedom to ensure that they get their way. This attack by Trump on the White House Press Corps is probably just the first stage in this attack on that freedom.

I have little doubt that there will be more moves to follow if this move goes ahead, as seems likely to be the case.

There will be attacks on the media organizations that the White House press corps have worked for. We already know that Associated Press - AP - one of the biggest news agencies in the world, has been barred from the White House for refusing to call the Gulf of Mexico the Gulf of America, which it very clearly is not.

We should now expect that Reuters and maybe Bloomberg and other major news organizations will be banned from the White House as well, including the mainstream media channels in the USA - CNN, MSNBC, and so on - they might go. Who will they be replaced with? Well, Fox News will of course still be there, and there may well be a lot of social media personalities from the far right, but the actual media, the people who people rely upon for news, will not be present.

And my suspicion is that the licenses that they are granted to broadcast inside the USA will also be increasingly revoked.

We've already seen Trump make moves against individual press outlets, particularly by threatening legal action over reporting of the events of 6 January, 2021.

But how long is it before he begins to close down these news organisations and newspapers, by threats of legal action, which they will not be able to afford to defend, and which they know the Supreme Court will support?

And will he even go against things like YouTube and the channels that criticise him on

that platform, which are then rebroadcast into the USA even if prepared outside? Exactly, by the way, as this channel is, when roughly 50 per cent of our viewership comes from the USA, for which I'm very grateful, but I do wonder for how long it will last.

This is deeply troubling. We are living in an era when everything that we valued about the freedom to say what we thought, so long as we stayed within reasonable boundaries of not causing threat to others, is going. That's not the criteria that Trump is using. Trump is using the sole criteria of support me or I oppose you.

If that is where the media is going in the USA - and I believe it must be because of the move that he has now made - then press freedom will have gone.

One of the fundamental tenets of the US Constitution will have gone.

The people of the USA will have to decide what to do about this.

How will they manage without that freedom? Can they manage without that freedom? Will they manage without that freedom? And what happens? They need to react to this.

I know what I will continue to do. I'll continue to criticise Trump and to call him out for what he is even if there is risk in doing so, because I believe that is the right thing to do, but will the US media do the same?

I hope so, and I hope the US people will support them in whatever steps they take to achieve that goal because in an era when the media has been everywhere, all around us, in a sense overwhelming in its output, we suddenly face the possibility that there will be no media that we can rely upon at all. And that is deeply threatening.