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Westminster Declaration

The **Westminster Declaration** was a publicly stated warning about an increasing censorship in many countries around the world, that is facilitated by the ongoing digital transformation. The declaration was also concerned with the abandonment of journalistic values of debate and intellectual inquiry.

The declaration was published on October 18th 2023, after some of the signatories had convened in Westminster , London at the end of June 2023.^[1] The declaration was signed by 138 renowned intellectuals and academics from various backgrounds, such as whistleblower Edward Snowden , activist Julian Assange , psychologists Jordan Peterson and Steven Pinker , biologist Richard Dawkins , economist Jeffrey Sachs , and journalists Michael Shellenberger , Matt Taibbi , and Bari

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Michael D. Shellenberger is an

American author and former public relations professional who writes about politics, the environment, climate



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We write as journalists and academics to warn that the digital transformation threatens to erode the public square. Coming from a tradition of journalistic commitment to truth, we are all deeply

as ‘misinformation,’ ‘disinformation,’ and other ill-defined terms.^[2]

It continues by naming “government actors, social media companies, universities, and NGOs ” as participants in a so-called “Censorship-Industrial Complex” that cooperate to restrict the freedom of expression by means of online filtering, deplatforming , and direct laws. Legitimate opinions would be

censored by labeling them as fake news.^[4] Specifically named examples of such processes are the Twitter Files, the European Union's Digital Services Act and recent government attempts to abolish private encrypted communication.

The declaration concludes with three calls to action: For governments, to uphold Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which grants freedom of opinion and expression. For tech corporations to refrain from digital censorship. And for the general public to build an atmosphere of free speech and reject a climate of intolerance.

Considering the high profile of the signatories, media coverage on the declaration was noticeably low. It was covered in the US in the New York Post^[5], in the UK by The Daily Telegraph^[6] and in Germany by Die Welt^[7].

References

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