

Your Freedom of Speech Doesn't Exist

The Global North, most commonly the United States of America and the UK, love to [claim](#) the moral high ground against countries whose civilian populations they have eviscerated with bombs. This moral high ground, according to Americans and their colonizer-in-arm the British, comes from the inalienable right of “freedom of speech” that is only found in these countries. This positioning has successfully manufactured consent for millions of global north citizens for their countries to commit heinous acts of depravity against innocent populations.

“It might be bad here, but at least we have freedom of speech.”

This is a common retort that many anti-imperialists are forced to deal with when bringing up valid foreign and domestic criticisms of countries like the United States.

Americans specifically have become so brainwashed by this supposed perfect argument that they have accepted domestic oppression for years.

Ice agents [kidnapping](#) thousands of innocent women, children, and men?

“At least we have freedom of speech.”

Thousands of [preventable](#) deaths a year due to the for-profit private insurance industry?

“At least we have freedom of speech.”

Hundreds of thousands of [homeless](#) Americans?

“At least we have freedom of speech.”

Tens of millions of Americans being [crushed](#) by the weight of their student loan debt?

“At least we have freedom of speech.”

Hundreds of innocent pro-Palestinian campus protesters [detained](#) for opposing genocide?

“At least we have freedom of sp—”

It seems that defense cannot apply here.

Even if this abstract idea of “freedom of speech” did fully exist in countries like the US, it would not justify invading, attacking, bombing, or assassinating heads of states in other countries which are different politically and economically to Western countries. But the reality is this framing – which governments and people use to consistently justify present reality – does not

even exist. Freedom of speech is a sham in the United States and its allies in the UK and Western Europe.

But We Have Freedom of Speech!

In the United States of America, the suppression, attacking of, and abducting of pro-Palestinian voices is a clear example of this facade. Rümeyza Öztürk and Mahmoud Khalil were both unlawfully detained for their pro-Palestine stances. Öztürk was [abducted](#) by six masked, plainclothes agents of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) after her F-1 Visa was revoked. She was held in a South Louisiana ICE processing center for roughly three months before being released. Her error? An Op-ed she co-authored for her university's *Tufts Daily*. [Khalil](#) was a lead negotiator in the Gaza Solidarity Encampment at Columbia University and was targeted for his transgression of opposing the wholesale slaughter of Palestinians.

In another case, Courtney Williams, an army veteran, is dealing with accusations of revealing classified information about an elite commando unit. In Seth Harp's *Fort Bragg Cartel*, Williams revealed that the Delta Force – America's most elite Army Unit – is only restricted from doing intelligence work in one country: Israel. For this gross violation, Williams is being subject to the weight of the United States government.

Across the Atlantic in Europe, it is not much better. In the United Kingdom, the only group which was doing anything to materially stop the Palestinian genocide, Palestine Action, were proscribed as a terrorist group on July 5, 2025. You personally may not agree with their methods or support the individuals within Palestine Action, but what about the hundreds of protestors [arrested](#) for simply showing peaceful solidarity?

In France, Zionists are actively trying to [outlaw](#) the action of simply criticising Israel. And if you have a problem with that, you can't protest against it without being arrested. In Germany, you will be arrested and [physically silenced](#) from voicing any support for Palestine or Lebanon. Or more specifically, for opposing Israel.

It may seem as though our speech is only limited if we talk about Palestine. The solution, then, for some, is to simply cease talking about it. That belief in itself is an admission that the United States and Western nations alike do not have the freedom of speech they claim to. When the speech of anyone goes against the American State Department, our freedoms suddenly shrink.

And Their Rights Are Massively Suppressed!

We are at war with Iran to bring freedom to the oppressed masses, or so we are told. Liberation through bombs. Some must die in order to provide a new dawn for the vast majority of Iranians. A clean slate of western-flavored liberation with all the amazing freedoms that come with it. But this framing assumes Iranians have no rights to begin with. A large focus of western propaganda is Iranian women and the hijab. Yet, Iranian women are some of the most highly

[educated](#) women in the world. The youth literacy rate for girls is just shy of universal, at 98%. Women comprise 60% of university students, 70% of STEM students, and 60% of humanities and arts students. Education is intrinsically tied to liberation. A blanket generalization to say all Iranian women are oppressed simply doesn't hold water.

If your problem with Iran pertains to women's inability to take off their hijab, it is crucial to understand that the Islamic Republic was a reaction to American imperialism with the Shah of Iran. And even if you aren't convinced that Iranians have a speck of freedom today, know that they objectively have more freedoms than when they were under the [thumb](#) of the Shah. Additionally, 'taking off the hijab' is often a western orientalist framing of liberation that includes the hypersexualization of Iranian women for western men. Women's liberation isn't confined to them being able to wear clothes that turn on straight white guys.

British opinion-haver Piers Morgan [claims](#) that the West is better because we can actually criticize our government. This surface-level analysis is something you'd expect from a child, but adult British men aren't far off. As we have seen, we actually *cannot* criticize our government on certain things. And if we do, we are punished. This is the case even without external forces actively trying to topple the United States regime.

Regarding Iran, the West has an open policy of regime change. Of course speech criticizing the current power structure will be limited. Foreign actors are actively trying to [stoke](#) uprisings to cause chaos in the region. This is not a justification for state oppression, but a material explanation for why it is happening. If you want Iran to liberalise, you must be in favor of respecting its sovereignty and allowing the people of Iran to push for those changes internally. Put another way, as long as Western forces are trying to take control of Iran, Iranian leadership will have every reason to do what they must to maintain the existence of their state – the primary concern of *any* state.

The United States government is not at constant threat of being overthrown by foreign actors. They can allow mild criticisms of the government to create a facade of freedom. Material conditions in Iran make it so they cannot afford that. When foreign actors are trying to overthrow you, you are going to limit dissident behavior. If there ever comes a time where the US is threatened, the mild dissident behavior we do see will no longer be allowed. The University Encampments already prove that.

Conclusion

We must stop allowing this bogus framing to continue to justify the United State's (and their ally's) imperialism. Stop falling for it. As long as this propaganda continues to cycle in the minds of regular citizens, these countries can do whatever they want, despite the fact that this framing clearly isn't true. Your freedom of speech extends only as far as the status quo allows it and as long as it is not creating a material opposition to the interest of the capitalist class which runs the state.

To reiterate, the entire premise of this position is toothless. It simply does not matter how many “more” rights we have compared to so-called adversaries. That in and of itself will never be a justification for mass murdering innocent civilians nor does it put Western countries which weaponize this talking point in the positive light it thinks it does.

If your takeaway is: “fine, I just won’t talk about those topics,” then great. At least you are acknowledging the conditional nature of your so-called Freedom of Speech™.