

United States Senate

September 30, 2021

Satya Nadella
Chief Executive Officer
Microsoft Corporation
One Microsoft Way
Redmond, WA 98052

Ryan Roslansky
Chief Executive Officer
LinkedIn Corporation
1000 W. Maude Avenue
Sunnyvale, CA 94085

Dear Mr. Nadella and Mr. Roslansky:

I write regarding LinkedIn's recent decision to censor the accounts of several American journalists, including Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian¹ with Axios, Melissa Chan² with VICE News and freelance reporter Greg Bruno³. I am deeply concerned that an American company is actively censoring American journalists on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party. Members of the media report information that is critical to helping Americans, including members of Congress, understand the scope of Communist China's abuses, especially its abuses against and surveillance of Uyghurs in Xinjiang.

General Secretary Xi is actively leading the Communist Chinese government in a genocide against Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Across the region, the Communist Chinese government has built hundreds of concentration camps where it can imprison, torture and enslave more than a million Uyghurs at any given time, simply because of their religion. Children are separated from their parents and pressured to renounce their Uyghur heritage. Unspeakable crimes, including forced abortion and forced sterilization, have been committed against women. Video footage has shown blindfolded Uyghurs being loaded onto trains and transported to the concentration camps.

The censorship of these journalists raises serious questions about Microsoft's intentions and its commitment to standing up against Communist China's horrific human rights abuses and repeated attacks against democracy. These acts of censorship by your company, and the apparent broader Microsoft censorship policy of, "offering a localized version of LinkedIn in China,"⁴ is gross appeasement and an act of submission to Communist China. LinkedIn's

¹ Bethany Allen-Ebrahimian @BethanyAllenEbr "Tweet Message." *Twitter*, September 28, 2021.

<https://twitter.com/BethanyAllenEbr/status/1442838821339639819?s=20>

² Melissa Chan @melissakchan "Tweet Message." *Twitter*. September 28, 2021.

<https://twitter.com/melissakchan/status/1442762332577452032?s=20>

³ Greg Bruno @Gregcbruno "Tweet Message." *Twitter*. September 28, 2021.

<https://twitter.com/gregcbruno/status/1442817370888736768>

⁴ Ibid

decisions only emboldens Communist China to continue their abuses against the Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities in Xinjiang.

Disappointingly, LinkedIn has a history of censoring customers who have criticized the Chinese Communist Party. In 2014, LinkedIn censored a user who posted about the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre.⁵ In 2019, it censored the account of Zhou Fengsuo, a Chinese human rights activist living in New York.⁶ Similar restrictions were imposed on an American congressional staffer and academics living overseas.⁷ This year's wave of new restrictions comes after LinkedIn executives met with the Chinese Communist Party and agreed to meet their demands on censorship.⁸

While Microsoft is censoring journalists abroad, it is actively spreading misinformation domestically. In March 2021, Microsoft openly decried an election security law passed by the Georgia legislature which made it easier for Georgia residents to vote while reducing the possibility of fraud.⁹

Meanwhile, your company has been silent on Communist China rigging its elections and General Secretary Xi declaring himself ruler for life. In the face of these true assaults on democracy, Microsoft is openly suppressing those who try to expose Xi's authoritarian rule.

Millions of Americans use Microsoft products every day and many are users of LinkedIn. Unfortunately, it is unclear if Microsoft cares more about appeasing the Chinese Communist Party than it does about the rights of American citizens and journalists. As a member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, I ask that you provide answers to the following questions:

1. Why did LinkedIn censor the accounts of Ms. Allen-Ebrahimian, Ms. Chan and Mr. Bruno?
2. Which parts of the respective accounts did LinkedIn find objectionable?
3. Will LinkedIn stop censoring the accounts of these journalists? If not, why not?

⁵ Matt Schiavenza, "LinkedIn Abides By Chinese Censorship Laws -- But Is It Consistent?" *International Business Times*, September 4, 2014. <https://www.ibtimes.com/linkedin-abides-chinese-censorship-laws-it-consistent-1678060>

⁶ Megha Rajagopalan, "LinkedIn Censored A Pro-Democracy Activist's Profile In China," *Buzzfeed News*, January 4, 2019. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/meghara/china-linkedin-zhou-fengsuo>

⁷ Liza Lin, "Scholars on LinkedIn Are Being Blocked in China 'Without Telling Them Why'" *Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 2021. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/academics-bristle-over-linkedin-blocking-their-profiles-in-china-11624366667>

⁸ Ibid

⁹ "Why we are concerned about Georgia's new election law" *Microsoft*, March 31, 2021. <https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2021/03/31/why-we-are-concerned-about-georgias-new-election-law/>

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4. Does Microsoft or LinkedIn employ members of the Chinese Communist Party?
5. Did a member of the Chinese Communist Party contact Microsoft or LinkedIn to request that these accounts be censored?
6. Is censorship of user views that are not aligned with the Chinese Communist Party a function of LinkedIn's "localized version" of its platform in China?
7. How many accounts has LinkedIn censored because of content the Chinese Communist Party disliked, or that LinkedIn feared might upset Chinese Communist Party authorities?
8. Why does Microsoft choose to weigh in on domestic political matters, but stay silent on foreign political matters, and what is its decision-making process for speaking on political matters?

I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a prominent "S".

Rick Scott
United States Senator