

PayPal shuts accounts of anti-war publications Consortium News and MintPress News

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Over the past week, the online payments company PayPal has launched a censorship campaign against independent and left-wing publishers who have been critical of the official narrative about the US and NATO war against Russia in Ukraine by arbitrarily shutting down their accounts.

On Sunday, *Consortium News* (CN) reported that PayPal had canceled its account without warning or explanation. Editor-in-Chief Joe Lauria reported that CN's PayPal account was "permanently limited" just as the publication was launching its Spring Fund Drive.

Lauria wrote that CN had lost one of the "most important ways for its viewers and readers to show their support through donations." Meanwhile, PayPal told Lauria that the CN balance the payments company was holding might never be returned to the publication.

Upon the shutdown of the account, PayPal sent CN an email that stated, "You can't use PayPal anymore. ... We noticed activity in your account that's inconsistent with our User Agreement and we no longer offer you PayPal services. ... Because of potential risk exposure, we've permanently limited your account. You'll no longer be able to use the account for any transactions."

In a phone conversation with a PayPal customer service agent, CN was told that there was no reason recorded in their system as why the account had been shut down. The agent said that the account was under "investigation and review" and that CN's "history found some potential risk associated with this account."

Regarding the remaining balance in CN's Pay Pal account, the agent said the money would be held for 180 days while an investigation was completed before a decision would be made about whether or not the funds would be returned. The agent said, "If there was a

violation," it is possible that the money would be kept by PayPal for "damages."

CN reported that, among the violations listed under Restricted Activities of the User Agreement are "false, inaccurate or misleading information" to PayPal, other PayPal customers "or third parties."

CN's Lauria then wrote, "Given the current political climate it is more than conceivable that PayPal is reacting to Consortium News' coverage of the war in Ukraine, which is not in line with the dominant narrative that is being increasingly enforced."

Consortium News is an independent investigative news website founded in 1995 by the journalist Robert Parry, who had worked for the Associated Press and Newsweek. Parry was instrumental in reporting on the Iran-Contra crisis of the Reagan administration in 1985, including exposing the activities of Oliver North in the White House.

On Friday afternoon, Mnar Adley, founder and editor of MintPress, reported via Twitter that her own personal account, that of MintPress and of senior staff writer Alan MacLeod had been shut down by PayPal. She tweeted, "Paypal banning myself and MintPress is blatant censorship of dissenting journalists & outlets. For the past decade MintPress has been unapologetically working as a watchdog journalism outlet to expose the profiteers of the permanent war state."

In a series of subsequent tweets, Mnar wrote that it is outrageous that "tech giants, which are run by those who directly profit from the New Cold war, including the crisis in Ukraine, could limit any journalist's ability to fund their work." She pointed out that if such measure were taken in Russia, China or Iran, "our

media would be screaming about free speech and first amendment rights.” She said that the censorship was being endorsed “under the guise of fighting ‘Russian propaganda.’”

A recent article by Alan MacLeod on MintPress points out that among the purported “independent” Ukrainian journalists are “individuals who previously worked for NATO think tank The Atlantic Council, the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine, or for the Council on Foreign Relations.”

On Thursday, the account of journalist and political analyst Caleb T. Maupin was shut down by PayPal with no explanation. Maupin published a screen shot of the notice he received that said, “You can no longer use PayPal” and tweeted, “I am banned from PayPal.”

Maupin, who identifies himself as a socialist, has written for RT America and is the publisher of the Center for Political Innovation, an organization that says it is for “building socialism in America.” Due to his prior affiliation with RT (Russia Today), Maupin’s Twitter account has been labeled with the message, “Russia state-affiliated media.”

A recent article written by Maupin, entitled “The Danger of Washington’s Shallow ‘Human Rights’ Rhetoric,” exposes the hypocrisy behind US imperialist wars and regime change interventions being justified in the name of human rights, while simultaneously they often “involve the United States arming and assisting human rights violating entities.”

The censorship drive by PayPal against publishers exposing imperialist lies about the instigation by the US and NATO of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is an extension of the policy used by the payment processing company against WikiLeaks and its editor Julian Assange in 2010.

At that time, during the height of Assange’s exposure of imperialist war crimes in the Middle East—including the posting of the infamous “Collateral Murder” video in June of that year—PayPal intervened to shut off donations to WikiLeaks, saying that the website was engaged in “illegal activity.” This decision was followed by similar actions against WikiLeaks by Visa Europe, Mastercard, Amazon and the Swiss bank PostFinance.

According to a report by the BBC on December 8, 2010, PayPal Vice President Osama Bedier said the firm received a letter from the US State Department on

November 27 that said the activities of WikiLeaks were illegal. PayPal later said that what Bedier meant to say was that the State Department letter was sent to WikiLeaks.

PayPal is a Silicon Valley multinational financial technology company based in San Jose, California. Founded in 1998 as Confinity by the German-American billionaire and right-wing venture capitalist and Donald Trump supporter Peter Thiel and others, it went public in 2002 and currently has a Wall Street value of \$105 billion.

The shutdown by PayPal of the accounts of *Consortium News*, MintPress and Caleb T. Maupin are part of the ongoing efforts by the US ruling establishment and tech monopolies to silence those who do not support the narrative promoted by Democrats and Republicans and corporate media about the origins and reasons for the war in Ukraine.

It follows by two months the shutdown of the television channel RT America and the removal of the video archives from YouTube of commentators Chris Hedges and Lee Camp, among others, who also exposed the background to the imperialist provocation against Russia in Ukraine.

Workers and young people must demand the restoration of the PayPal accounts of those who have been suspended on the grounds that this is an attack on fundamental democratic and free speech rights. All factions of the ruling class are in agreement about silencing left, socialist and working class opposition to imperialist war and exposing the danger of World War III.



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