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ACLU Counsel Warns of 'Unchecked Power' of Twitter, Facebook After Trump Suspension

BY **NATALIE COLAROSS** ON 1/9/21 AT 1:21 PM EST

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NEWS

DONALD TRUMP

ACLU

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A legislative counsel member of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) warned Friday that the suspension of President Donald Trump's social media accounts wielded "unchecked power," by Twitter and Facebook.

Kate Ruane, a senior legislative counsel at the ACLU said in a statement that the decision to suspend Trump from social media could set a precedent for big tech companies to silence less privileged voices.

**Steve Herman**  @W7VOA · Jan 9, 2021 

Replying to @W7VOA

Reaction from the current chairman of @senjudiciary: twitter.com/LindseyGrahamS... #TwitterBansTrump

**Lindsey Graham**  @LindseyGrahamSC

Twitter may ban me for this but I willingly accept that fate: Your decision to permanently ban President Trump is a serious mistake.

The Ayatollah can tweet, but Trump can't. Says a lot about the people who run Twitter.

**Steve Herman**  @W7VOA

Reaction from @ACLU Senior Legislative Counsel Kate Ruane on the permanent suspension by #Twitter of @realDonaldTrump.

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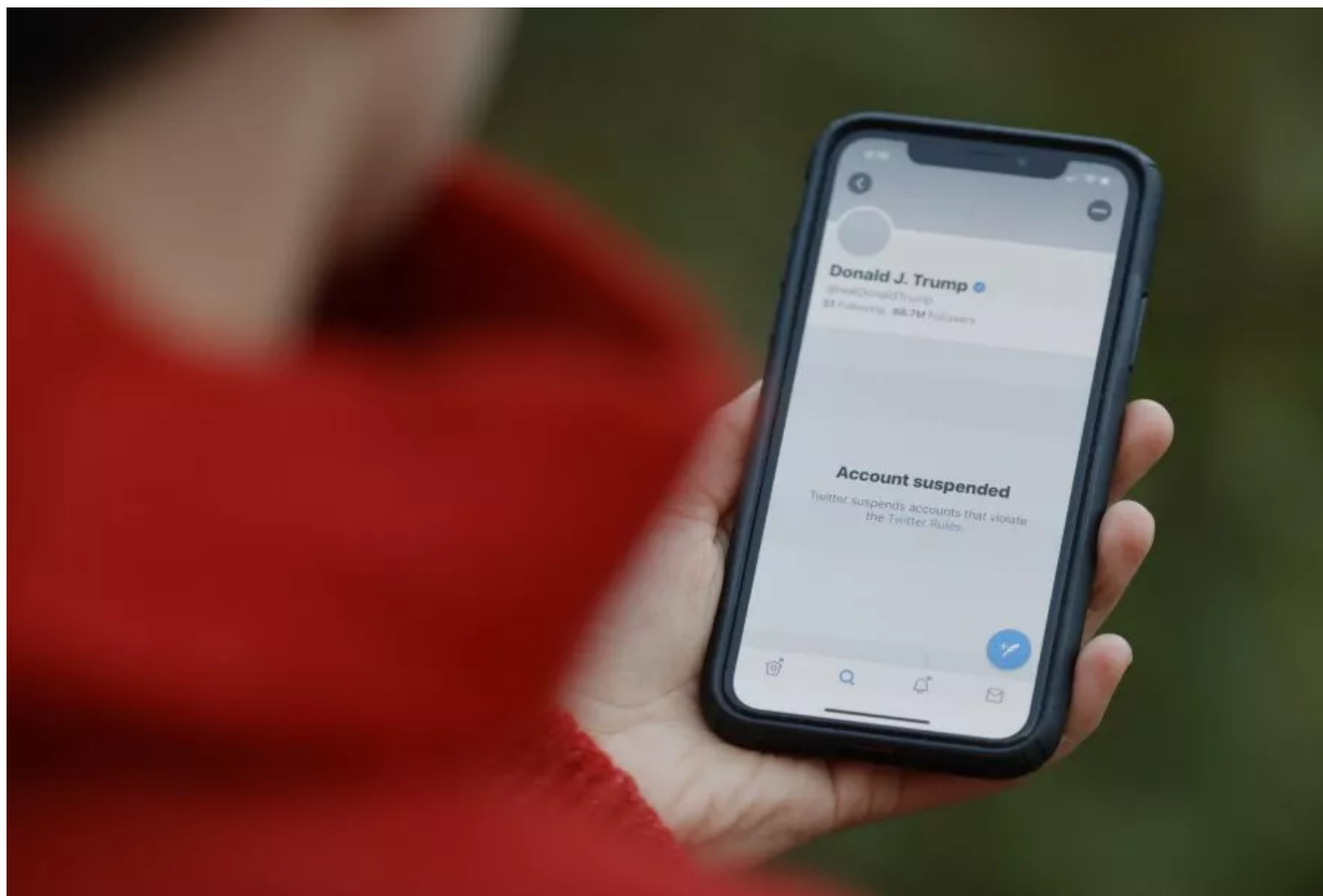
101 people are tweeting about this

"For months, President Trump has been using social media platforms to seed doubt about the results of the election and to undermine the will of voters. We understand the desire to permanently suspend him now, but it should concern everyone when companies like Facebook and Twitter wield the unchecked power to remove people from platforms that have become indispensable for the speech of billions – especially when political realities make those decisions easier," the statement read.

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"President Trump can turn his press team or Fox News to communicate with the public, but others – like many Black, Brown, and LGBTQ activists who have been censored by social media companies – will not have that luxury. It is our hope that these companies will apply their rules transparently to everyone.

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The ACLU warned Friday that permanently banning Trump from social media wields "unchecked power" by big tech companies. Here, the suspended Twitter account of U.S. President Donald Trump appears on an iPhone screen on January 08, 2021 in San Anselmo, California.

GETTY

The ACLU isn't the only voice in the legal community citing concern over the move to suspend Trump.

"I want a wide range of ideas, even those I loathe, to be heard, and I think Twitter especially holds a concerning degree of power over public discourse," Gregory P. Magarian, a law professor at Washington University in St. Louis told *The New York Times*.

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On Friday, Twitter announced that Trump would be permanently suspended

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The social media site placed a temporary ban on Trump's account Wednesday after a mob of his supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol, leaving five people dead—including a police officer—and many more injured.

After he regained access to his account, Trump wrote a tweet in which he called his supporters "American patriots," who will have "a GIANT VOICE long into the future." In a separate message, he said that he would not be attending President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration.

In response, Twitter said: "After close review of recent Tweets from the @realDonaldTrump account and the context around them — specifically how they are being received and interpreted on and off Twitter — we have permanently suspended the account due to the risk of further incitement of violence."

Facebook has also suspended Trump from using its platform until at least the end of his presidential term.

"We believe the risks of allowing the President to continue to use our service during this period are simply too great," Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said in a statement on Thursday.

"Therefore, we are extending the block we have placed on his Facebook and Instagram accounts indefinitely and for at least the next two weeks until the peaceful transition of power is complete."

On Friday, Trump condemned the tech companies for silencing him and said he will "look at the possibilities of building out our own platform in the near future."

Newsweek reached out to the ACLU for additional comment, but did not hear back.

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