

Social Justice Watch 0814

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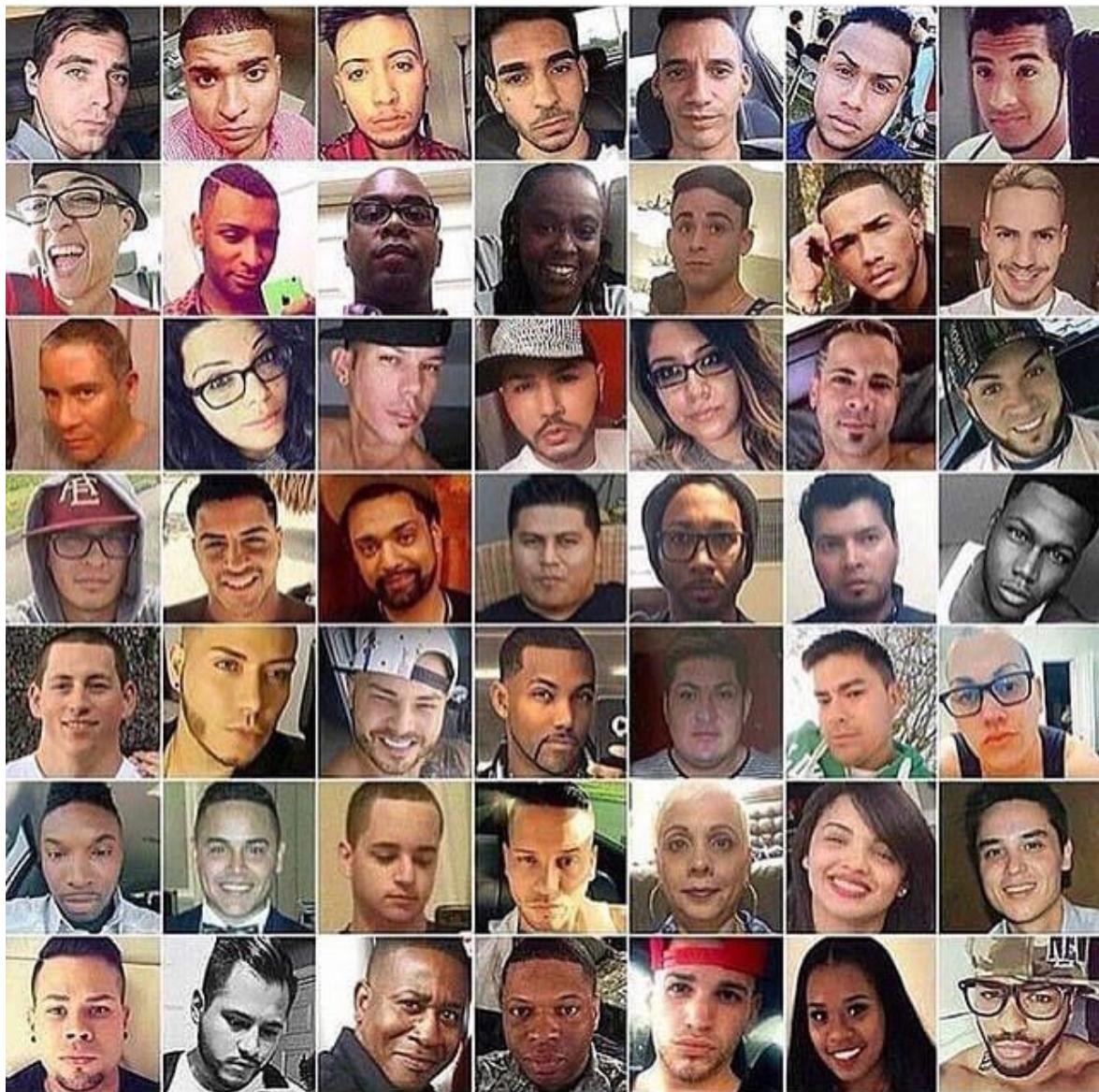
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**In loving memory of the
victims of the Pulse nightclub
shooting on June 12, 2016.**

Stanley Almodovar III
Amanda Alvear
Oscar A Aracena-Montero
Rodolfo Ayala-Ayala
Antonio Davon Brown
Darryl Roman Burt II
Angel L. Candelario-Padro
Juan Chavez-Martinez
Luis Daniel Conde
Cory James Connell
Tevin Eugene Crosby
Deonka Deidra Drayton
Simon Adrian Carrillo Fernandez
Leroy Valentin Fernandez
Mercedez Marisol Flores
Peter O. Gonzalez-Cruz
Juan Ramon Guerrero
Paul Terrell Henry
Frank Hernandez
Miguel Angel Honorado
Javier Jorge-Reyes
Jason Benjamin Josaphat
Eddie Jamoldroy Justice
Anthony Luis Laureanodisla
Christopher Andrew Leinonen

Alejandro Barrios Martinez
Brenda Lee Marquez McCool
Gilberto Ramon Silva Menendez
Kimberly Morris
Akyra Monet Murray
Luis Omar Ocasio-Capo
Geraldo A. Ortiz-Jimenez
Eric Ivan Ortiz-Rivera
Joel Rayon Paniagua
Jean Carlos Mendez Perez
Enrique L. Rios, Jr.
Jean C. Nieves Rodriguez
Xavier Emmanuel Serrano Rosado
Christopher Joseph Sanfeliz
Yilmary Rodriguez Solivan
Edward Sotomayor Jr.
Shane Evan Tomlinson
Martin Benitez Torres
Jonathan Antonio Camuy Vega
Juan P. Rivera Velazquez
Luis S. Vielma
Franky Jimmy Dejesus Velazquez
Luis Daniel Wilson-Leon
Jerald Arthur Wright





4 years ago, 49 people were shot & killed inside the [#PulseNightclub](#)

Never stop fighting for your LGBT+ friends, families, siblings, & strangers for their every right to love who they want, freely be who they are, have the safety they need, & the opportunities & life they deserve [source](#)

本报记者暗访某餐馆：4人点了8份菜 没有一盘全吃光

重庆日报 今天

8月11日晚，重庆日报记者兵分四路，走访我市部分餐馆，发现餐饮浪费现象仍很常见。

Following President Xi's urge of not wasting food, journalists of Chongqing Daily went undercover in a restaurant, reporting that "four diners ordered eight dishes and finished none of it:" bit.ly/3gPiX4T

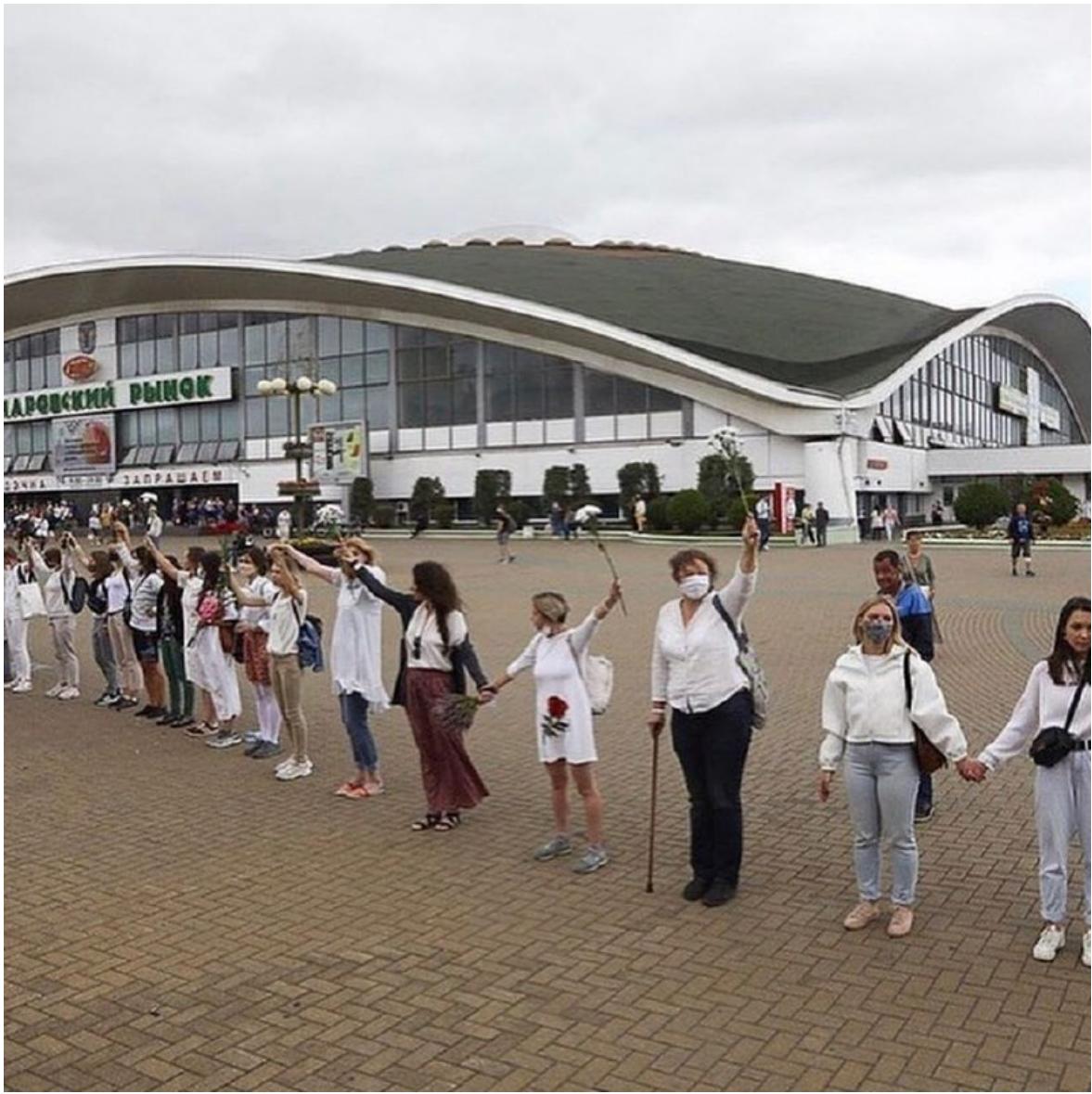
This is the investigative journalism we have today. [source](#)











Women in [#Belarus](#) have formed human chains to condemn a crackdown on protests, as demonstrations over the disputed election entered a fifth day.

Many dressed in white and carried flowers as they called for an end to police brutality.

Thousands of people have been arrested and at least two have died. We are with you, women of Belarus. Xx

[@nikaemerald](#) [@bbcnews](#)

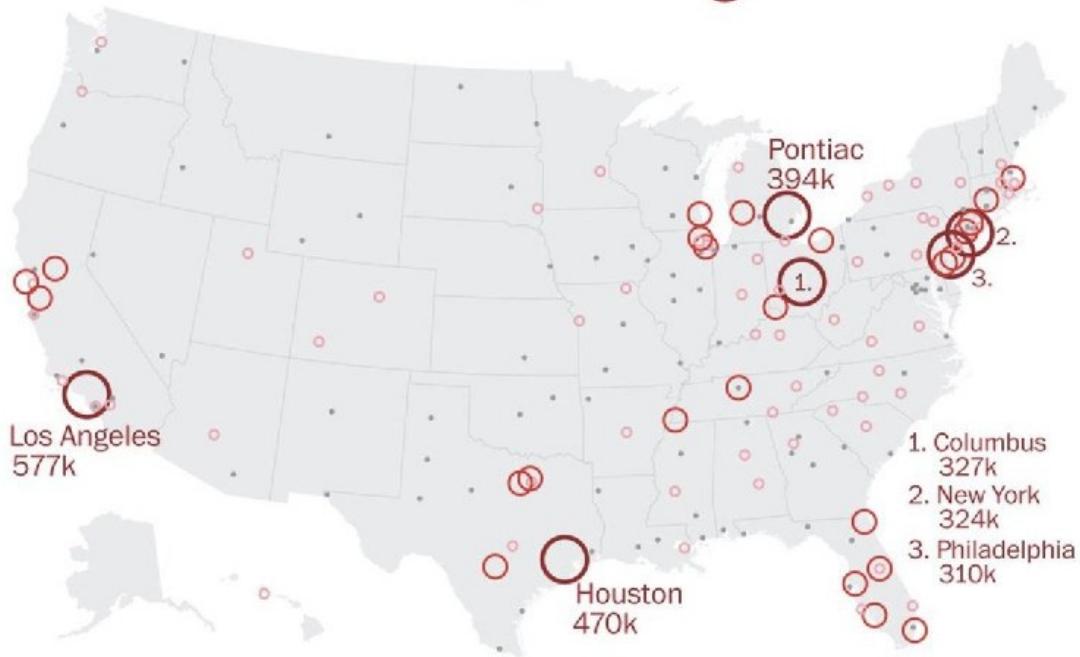


[source](#)

Postal Service reduction in sorting capacity

in pieces of mail per hour

• 100k or less ◊ 100-200k ○ 200-300k ● 300k or more



Source: U.S. Postal Service

THE WASHINGTON POST

USPS data showing at least 671 USPS mail sorting machines have been removed across the country since June. Represents a reduction in national mail sorting capacity of 21.4 million pieces of mail per hour. [link](#) [source](#) [news](#)

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telegra.ph/Former-Jehovahs-Witness-elders-call-for-mandatory-reporting-of-child-sexual-abuse--World-news--The-Guardian-08-12 | [source](#)

Telegraph

Former Jehovah's Witness elders call for mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse

Two former Jehovah's Witness elders have called for mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, saying the organisation believes it is “answerable only to God”. Duncan Corbett, who was an elder for 18 years, told the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse...

telegra.ph/Why-Belarus-Is-Not-Ukraine-08-12 | [source](#)

Telegraph

Why Belarus Is Not Ukraine

Yes, there are surprisingly big protests—like those that rocked Kyiv six years ago—being met with brutal crackdowns. But Belarus is a whole different story. | August 12, 2020, 3:16 PM Scenes in Belarus of protesters erecting crude barricades while fending...

The reality is, for all our misgivings about WeChat, there is no reasonable alternative that can sustain the same level of grass-roots communication flows between people in China and people outside of it. Thus, the net effect of a “ban” would be to reduce such communications, which benefits only those who prefer ignorance to knowledge. telegra.ph/A-WeChat-ban-will-hurt-ordinary-citizens-There-are-better-ways-to-hold-China-accountable-08-12

Telegraph

A WeChat ban will hurt ordinary citizens. There are better ways to hold China accountable.

Opinion by Times Wang and Jianli Yang August 12, 2020 at 1:04 PM EDT
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telegra.ph/What-happens-to-protests-now-that-federal-agents-have-left-Portland-08-13 | source

Telegraph

What happens to protests now that federal agents have left Portland?
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telegra.ph/Don-Jr-Ted-Cruz-shared-Russian-misinformation-on-Black-Lives-Matter-08-13 | source

Telegraph

Don Jr., Ted Cruz shared Russian misinformation on Black Lives Matter
Donald Trump Jr., Sen. Ted Cruz, and other high-profile Republicans shared a viral news story in early August about Black Lives Matter protesters burning "a stack of Bibles" in front of a courthouse in Portland. According to The New York Times, the story...

I think this is the major disconnect in the discussion about bail:
Those who oppose bail reform insist releasing people makes us less safe. Those who support reform point out that bail allows the wealthy to buy their way out of jail, while leaving the poor incarcerated pretrial. [link](#) [source](#)

Twitter

Joshua B. Hoe

I wonder how much outrage there would have been if Shawn McClinton had paid 15k and gotten out legally? Basically, this case proves that bail is a means of legally discriminating against poor largely black, and brown defendants

in sex education at school we learned about wet dreams, male ejaculation and male masturbation, but absolutely nothing about female pleasure. A lot of men treat sex as something they do to women, not with women. So yep actually a song about female pleasure is good [source](#)

The truth is, once you start actively reading books by Black, POC and LGBT+ writers, books that aren't diverse seem boring [source](#)

[telegra.ph/Middlemarch-reissued-with-George-Eliots-real-name-08-13](#)

Telegraph

Middlemarch reissued with George Eliot's real name

Novels written by women using male pen names have been reissued using the authors' actual names. The collection includes George Eliot's Middlemarch, which has been reissued under the author's real name, Mary Ann Evans, for the first time. The 25 titles have...

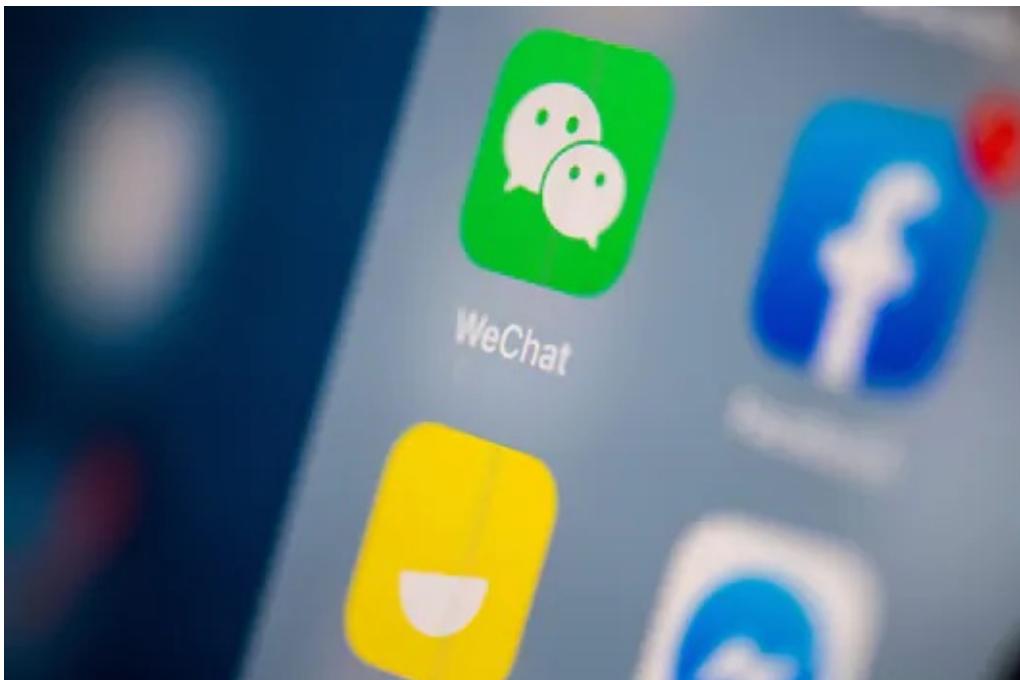
The connection between capital and police violence is clear: “Our communities face intense repression from the state because it is profitable.”

——Jackie Fielder is running for California State Senate in District 11 [source](#)

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A WeChat ban will hurt ordinary citizens. There are better ways to hold China accountable.

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The Chinese app WeChat on the screen of a tablet. (Martin Bureau/AFP/Getty Images)

Opinion by Times Wang and Jianli Yang August 12, 2020 at 1:04 PM EDT

Times Wang is the founder of North River Law PLLC, a law firm focused on litigation related to human rights. Dr. Jianli Yang, a former political prisoner of China, is founder and president of Citizen Power Initiatives for China.

When news broke about President Trump's executive order targeting WeChat, the Chinese social media and e-commerce app, we were deeply ambivalent. We've been working on a series of lawsuits on behalf of U.S. users against the

company over its censorship and surveillance practices for months now, so we certainly understood the impulse. But we fear the executive order risks going too far, because it will reduce the exchange of grass-roots information between people inside China and people outside of it, and because it threatens to bring the United States down to China's level when it comes to free expression.

Neither of us can be described as sympathizers of the Chinese Communist Party. One of us, Yang Jianli, was a survivor of the Tiananmen Square massacre. The other, Times Wang, is the son of one of China's most prominent political prisoners, Wang Bingzhang.

Nor can we be said to be naive about WeChat. Indeed, we probably know better than the government the nature and reality of how WeChat's practices undermine free speech in the United States. The cases we've uncovered, all involving ethnically Chinese people, both citizens and non-citizens, share one thing in common: The users made postings perceived as critical of the Chinese government. The consequences have included the blocking and deletion of accounts, resulting in the erasure of cherished photos and memories, as well as the distressing inability to communicate with family members in China in the middle of a pandemic.

They've also included business opportunities lost. WeChat encourages its users to do business over its platform, and indeed, countless conversations about potential transactions are held on WeChat daily. But we've heard from people who were in the middle of discussing deals potentially worth thousands or even millions of dollars when they decided to have the temerity to say something vaguely critical of the Chinese government. Suddenly, their accounts were blocked, and they lost business as a result.

In at least one case, they also include harrowing consequences for family members back in China. One user who has been in the United States since 2017, and who hasn't returned to China since, posted critical comments about the Chinese government from the United States. Then, in late 2019, his family in China messaged him to ask whether he'd been posting such comments on WeChat, because security agents had visited their home and taken pictures.

And yet, we have deep concerns that the administration's announcement might lead to policies that go too far. Any measures that resemble China's Great Firewall would be anathema to the First Amendment, and thus unconstitutional.

But even lesser policies might undermine the government's stated interest in "engaging and empowering" ordinary Chinese people. The reality is, for all our misgivings about WeChat, there is no reasonable alternative that can sustain the same level of grass-roots communication flows between people in China and people outside of it. Thus, the net effect of a "ban" would be to reduce such communications, which benefits only those who prefer ignorance to knowledge.

Given all this, we hope that whatever the administration does next, it considers the following.

First, the administration has an array of legal options that we, as private parties, don't have, including, for example, a Federal Trade Commission investigation and lawsuit. If, with our relatively puny resources, we can put together enough facts to bring a lawsuit in less than a year, surely the federal government could do so even more quickly.

Second, we agree that using WeChat on official devices poses a potential security risk, and neither of us has WeChat on our own devices. Thus, policies tailored to address that security risk in official settings seem appropriate.

Third, the ultimate goal should be to undermine censorship and enhance transparency and freedom of expression — not to simply mirror the Chinese government's behavior, unbound by any principle other than an eye for an eye. Indeed, the ultimate goal (which should be woven into all aspects of the government's China policy, and not just as it relates to WeChat) should be to tear down the Great Firewall someday and hopefully someday soon.

The world is watching these events unfold with bated breath, including in China, where lamentations about the possibility of the United States copying China's policies are not uncommon. If the U.S. government truly cares about free speech, about its ethnically Chinese citizens and, as it claims, about people living in China, it would do well to keep such concerns in mind.

Meanwhile, our private efforts to hold WeChat accountable are proceeding apace, and if the government is interested in learning about our efforts, our law firm and nonprofit are both in D.C., and we are just down the street.

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Don Jr., Ted Cruz shared Russian misinformation on Black Lives Matter

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A screenshot of Ruptly's video showing someone burning a Bible.

- Donald Trump Jr., Sen. Ted Cruz, and other high-profile Republicans shared a viral news story in early August about Black Lives Matter protesters burning "a stack of Bibles" in front of a courthouse in Portland.
- According to The New York Times, the story was seeded by a Russian news agency called Ruptly, and the highly edited footage shows only a few people burning one or two Bibles.

- The Times described this as one of Russia's first successful big disinformation hits ahead of the presidential election.
- In his tweet sharing the story, Trump Jr. implied that "book burning" was common among activists. Cruz wrote, "This is who they are."

Russia looks to have succeeded in seeding one of its first viral misinformation hits in the run-up to the presidential election.

On August 1, Donald Trump Jr., Sen. Ted Cruz, Newt Gingrich, and other high-profile right-wing and Republican figures shared the news, based on a video, that Black Lives Matter protesters had burned "a stack of Bibles" in front of a courthouse in Portland.

However, The New York Times found that the video originated from a Kremlin-affiliated news agency and had been heavily edited to present the Bible-burning as widespread when in reality a small group away from the main protests burned only one or two Bibles.

Trump Jr. shared a tweet from Ian Miles Cheong, a right-wing provocateur, that said, "Left-wing activists bring a stack of Bibles to burn in front of the federal courthouse in Portland."



Ian Miles Cheong 
@stillgray

Left-wing activists bring a stack of Bibles to burn in front of the federal courthouse in Portland. [twitter.com/Shelldrayk/sta...](https://twitter.com/Shelldrayk/status/129081180000000000)

11:46 AM · Aug 1, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

26.3K Retweets and comments 19.2K Likes



Ian Miles Cheong  @stillgray · Aug 1

Replying to @stillgray

I don't know what burning the Bible has to do with protesting against police brutality.

Do not be under the illusion that these protests and riots are anything but an attempt to dismantle all of Western Civilization and upend centuries of tradition and freedom of religion.



1.1K



8.7K



26.1K



Cheong's tweet linked to another tweet by a user who appears to have been suspended. The deleted tweet had a video from a Russian news agency called Ruptly, which you can still watch here, showing a small group of protesters burning a Bible and other materials.

Trump Jr. wrote: "Now we move to the book burning phase. I'm pretty sure Antifa doesn't actually stand for what they say it stands for. Maybe just remove the anti part of them name and it's perfect."

Cruz simply wrote: "This is who they are."

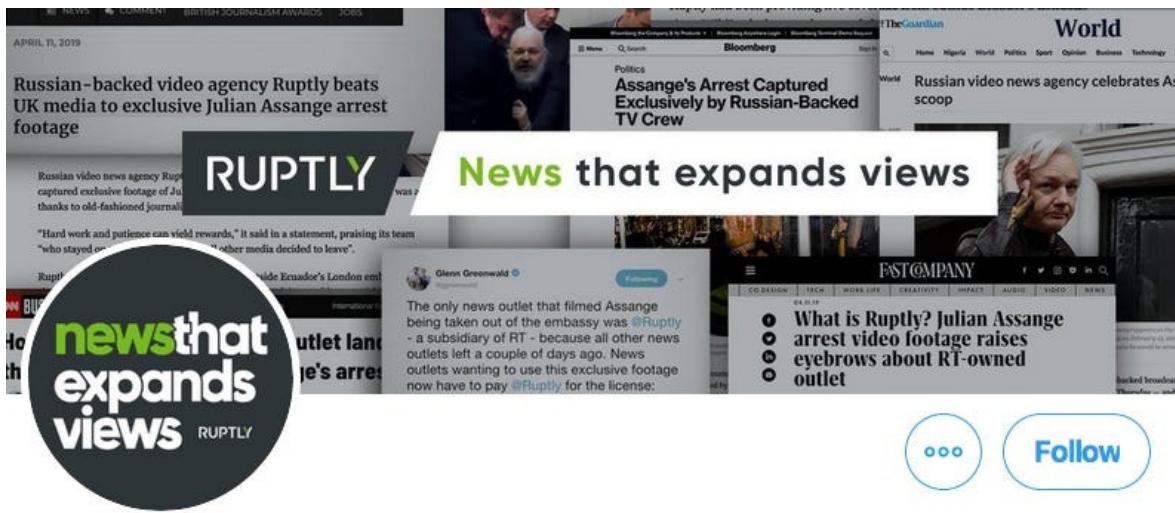
And Gingrich, the former House speaker, wrote: "Leftwing barbarians in Portland throwing Bibles into a fire reminds me of Indiana Jones and the Lost Crusade scene in Nazi Germany where Hitler's followers are burning Bibles and other books. We need an honest conversation about the barbarians and

totalitarians among us."

They implied that this is widespread behavior by Black Lives Matters protesters and indicative of illiberal attitudes.

But The Times' analysis shows that the truth is more complex.

The Times noted that the clip that was widely shared on social media originated from Ruptly, a division of the propaganda outfit RT. On Twitter, Ruptly is listed as a state-affiliated news agency.



Ruptly

@Ruptly

thumb-up Russia state-affiliated media

International video news agency. [Ruptly.tv](#)

location Berlin, Germany joined November 2012

Ruptly is owned by RT, a Kremlin propaganda outfit.

The Times said the video was edited to appear incendiary, presenting the Bible-burning as a central event in the protests.

Though a few protesters did burn one or two Bibles, it has gained outsize attention.

Ruptly pushed the story on its site and in tweets. It was also covered by RT, The Times reported.

A local news outlet that also covered the protest included a single sentence about the burning Bible in a longer report, adding that a group of protesters arrived to put out the flames.

Trump Jr.'s tweet was retweeted 19,000 times, while Cheong's tweet was retweeted more than 20,000 times.

Cruz was defensive in a follow-up tweet on Tuesday, writing: "NYT, in full ANTIFA-defense mode: 'The truth was far more mundane. A few protesters among many thousands appear to have burned a single Bible—& possibly a second—for kindling to start a bigger fire.' Yes, they burned Bibles, but not that many. OK, then."

—Ted Cruz (@tedcruz) August 11, 2020

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Former Jehovah's Witness elders call for mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse

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Two former Jehovah's Witness elders have called for mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, saying the organisation believes it is “answerable only to God”.

Duncan Corbett, who was an elder for 18 years, told the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse that the protection of minors and the handling of abuse claims must be taken out of the church’s hands. “Let them deal with the sin and the authorities handle the crime,” he told a hearing in London.

Lloyd Evans, another former elder who now campaigns against religious fundamentalism, said: “This is a group that feels they are answerable only to God ... They don’t feel as though they need to yield to any regulations that are imposed on them.”

The pair, along with another former Jehovah's Witness and a survivor of abuse, Sarah Davies, painted a picture in evidence to the inquiry of an organisation that demanded that its leaders be unquestioningly respected and obeyed, and that shunned members who failed to comply with its strict codes.

Davies, whose father was an elder and whose childhood was dominated by

religious meetings and Bible study, said she was taught that “we were God’s chosen people” and that everyone outside the faith was “controlled by Satan”. “The congregation is your life … I knew no different,” she said.

Evans, who rarely met people outside the faith as a child, said there was “no room for deviation” within the Jehovah’s Witnesses. “It can’t be overstated, the authority and influence that elders have,” he said.

According to Corbett, elders are told that their appointment has been “approved by the Holy Spirit”. It was “drilled into the congregation that they must be submissive,” he said.

Prospective elders were not subject to background checks but were asked a “one-off, once-in-a-lifetime” verbal question about sexual abuse. None of the three had any knowledge of child protection or safeguarding officials being employed or consulted.

A guidebook for elders, Shepherd the Flock of God, suggests that church leaders “endeavour to comply with secular laws” on abuse, the inquiry heard.

An anonymous witness had earlier said she had been sexually abused by a “ministerial servant” – the rung below an elder – who led study groups in her congregation and told her repeatedly that she would die in the coming armageddon. The abuse stopped when she was about nine, when the perpetrator, Peter Stewart, went to prison.

The abuse “changed who I became,” she told the hearing. “It took over everything … It literally decimated my life.” She also backed mandatory reporting, saying, “They are not going to change. They are who they are and anything imposed is going to have loopholes, so there has to be some external protection.”

Paul Gillies of the Christian Congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses said elders were given internal training on how to deal with abuse allegations. Asked about the structure of the organisation, he said: “We view the Bible as our constitution.”

A Guardian investigation in 2018, based on allegations from more than 100 people, revealed a “culture of cover-up and lies”.

Earlier this month, an open letter on behalf of all UK survivors of abuse at the hands of Jehovah's Witnesses demanded a public apology, saying the organisation should substantiate its claim to abhor child abuse.

The organisation, noted for its door-to-door and street evangelising, claims 8.6m members globally, and has 1,500 congregations in England and Wales.

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Middlemarch reissued with George Eliot's real name

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The Reclaim Her Name collection runs to 25 titles in all

Novels written by women using male pen names have been reissued using the authors' actual names.

The collection includes George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, which has been reissued under the author's real name, Mary Ann Evans, for the first time.

The 25 titles have been released to mark the 25th anniversary of the Women's Prize for Fiction.

The Reclaim Her Name library features newly commissioned cover artwork from female designers.

Other titles in the collection include *A Phantom Lover*, a gothic horror novel by Violet Paget published under the pen name Vernon Lee.

Also featured is *Indiana* by George Sand, the male pseudonym used by the 19th Century French novelist Amantine Aurore Dupin.



George Eliot portrait by François D'Albert Durade

Founder director of the Women's Prize for Fiction, Kate Mosse, said it was "a lovely way to celebrate" the award's 25th anniversary.

She said the initiative would continue a process of "empowering women, igniting conversations and ensuring they get the recognition they deserve".

Liz Petry, whose mother Anne's book *Marie of the Cabin Club* is featured in the collection, said she was "honoured" to have been approached.

"I'm incredibly proud of my mother's work and it excites me that her writing has been introduced to a new audience," she continued.

The full collection can be downloaded as free e-books from the website of Baileys, the Women's Prize for Fiction's sponsor.

Physical box sets will also be donated to selected libraries across the country.

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What happens to protests now that federal agents have left Portland?

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A crowd of about 1,500 protester gather at the Multnomah County Justice center for a Black Lives Matter march on July 20, 2020 in Portland, Ore. Monday night marked 54 days of protests in Portland following the police killing of George Floyd.

- For three weeks this summer, a coalition of activists and establishment local politicians united against the presence of federal agents in Portland.
- Federal officers have left, and the tensions between the state and local officials and activists are reemerging as activists push policymakers to reexamine local law enforcement policy with the same critical lens they viewed federal authorities through.
- Protests have continued. Behind the scenes, though, local policymakers have been working on changes to policing.

PORLAND, Ore. – For three weeks this summer, a coalition of activists and establishment local politicians united against the presence of federal agents in the city.

Now that agents from the US Department of Homeland Security, US Marshalls Service, and Federal Protective Services are no longer clashing with protesters nightly, the tensions between the state and local officials and activists are reemerging as activists push policymakers to reexamine local law enforcement policy with the same critical lens they viewed federal authorities through.

Even as the national spotlight that arrived with the controversial deployment of federal agents to Portland drew a wave of citizens to oppose police brutality, some activists say it partially distracted attention from the underlying movement to address the local police failures and other racial justice issues in the wake of George Floyd's death in Minneapolis police custody, after an officer knelt on his neck for nearly nine minutes.

"It created a distraction that drew away from our focus on making sure that our own police were not harming us," said Candace Avalos, who chairs a citizen review board of Portland police. "Obviously, the whole federal occupation needed to be addressed. It created an escalation of an already tense situation, but it distracted us from talking about the problems that we have in our own backyard. So I hope we can get back to talking about that."

Still, she added, activists and political leaders continued conversations about how best to reform local law enforcement.



PreviousNext Police respond to protesters during a demonstration, Friday, July 17, 2020 in Portland, Ore.

In the daylight hours between the protests near the federal courthouse downtown, city and state officials enacted several policies meant to curb police misbehavior.

The City Council cut the police bureau's budget and passed a resolution that created a ballot measure allowing voters to approve a new police accountability system. The state legislature passed six laws aiming to restrict the use of tear gas and chokeholds, creating a database of police misconduct, and other measures.

The protests, including those responding to the federal presence, created a political environment that motivated state and local leaders to act.

The conduct of federal officials – which included documented cases of seemingly unprovoked violence and legally dubious practice of detaining protesters in unmarked vehicles – galvanized support for the larger movement. Many of the newcomers were not Black, but their participation was important in

a city that's more than three-quarters white.

"That brought more people in," Avalos said. "I'm glad that many, many people showed up and spoke up against it. We've got to make room for people in this movement... The fact that they have come out, I think it does send a message."

But the new supporters often became the story themselves, drawing attention away from the underlying problems.

Teressa Raiford, a police accountability activist in Portland, said news media and outside observers paid more attention to the largely white demonstrators protesting the federal involvement than the issues for which she's long been advocating.

Even when members of the Wall of Moms – a protest group Raiford was briefly involved with and whose members were easily identifiable at protests because of their bright-yellow shirts – tried to draw attention to the killing of 18-year-old Shai'India Harris on the city's east side, the group itself became the focus.

"We're saying, 'Black lives matter, my kid just got shot, Black lives matter, my daughter just got murdered,'" Raiford said. "No one was listening to that. The world is like, 'Hey look, there's moms.' And the moms are like, 'Hey look there's Shai'India.' And the media is like, 'Hey look at you guys, you're wearing yellow shirts.' And that shit is weird to me."



Mothers form the front line of a protest in Portland, Oregon on July 20, 2020.

Behind the scenes, though, local policymakers have been working on changes to policing.

"It didn't shift my agenda," state Rep. Janelle Bynum, a Democrat and co-chair of a new joint committee on policing, said. "I think it shifted a lot of people who were comfortable sitting at home, busy throwing darts, that they realized that they, too, could have their rights stripped away."

City Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty, who sponsored the resolution to advance a ballot measure, said the demonstrations against federal agents didn't distract from the goals of Black Lives Matter supporters.

"I would not agree that the focus has changed, only that it has expanded to meet the demand of the moment," she said in an email. "Fighting for the dignity of Black lives and fighting for our democracy are not mutually exclusive. ... What we are seeing in this moment right now is an evolution in a continuum of calls

for justice for Black lives. Those calls can expand and contract to include fights like the overreach of the Federal government invading our spaces to protest."

Mayor Ted Wheeler, who is also the commissioner of the Portland Police Bureau, joined protesters one night in July and was among those whom federal agents teargassed.

When federal authorities and Gov. Kate Brown, a Democrat, announced the federal agents would reduce their role, it was seen as a victory for the state and local Democratic officials, but didn't meaningfully improve policing in the city, Avalos said.

"It gave an opportunity to have a seeming win without truly holding ourselves accountable," she said.

At a news conference a week after federal agents said they'd step back from engaging with protesters, Wheeler criticized some protesters who started fires near a city police station, saying they were providing footage for President Donald Trump's reelection campaign.



Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler is tear gassed while visiting protesters demonstrating against the presence of federal agents on July 22, 2020.

While Wheeler, who has never been popular with the city's police critics, and Hardesty, who has long called for more police accountability measures and led the local NAACP chapter before joining the council, voted together on the police budget cut and ballot measure resolution, they're somewhat regularly at odds with each other.

At the state level, Democrats created a joint legislative committee on police reform and got six bills through the legislature in their first special session this summer.

Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney, a Democrat, has said the year's second session, which opened Monday, will only address the budget issues. Republicans say they support that approach and want to wait until the next regular session in January to consider any further bills on police accountability.

Sen. James Manning Jr., a Democrat and Bynum's counterpart on the joint

committee, said he would seek to refine the bills passed in the first special session.

Republicans have already taken issue with the idea of more police reform measures in the next special session.

"I agree with Sen. Peter Courtney that this should be a budget-only session," House Republican Leader Christine Drazan said. Her Senate counterpart, Fred Girod, said "policy bills should be off the table."

Republicans, who are a minority in both chambers of the legislature, are open to some reform measures, Justin Brecht, a policy analyst with Senate Republicans, said. But the protests created such urgency that the bills passed in their aftermath were rushed through that could create unintended consequences, he said.

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Why Belarus Is Not Ukraine

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Yes, there are surprisingly big protests—like those that rocked Kyiv six years ago—being met with brutal crackdowns. But Belarus is a whole different story.

| August 12, 2020, 3:16 PM



Scenes in Belarus of protesters erecting crude barricades while fending off the attacks of heavily armored riot police have evoked memories of another uprising in the borderlands between Russia and the European Union: the 2014 Ukrainian revolution that erupted in Kyiv’s Maidan square, an uprising that drove out the country’s kleptocrat president and ushered in a new, if complicated, era in Ukraine.

The similarities certainly have not escaped Belarus’s authoritarian leader,

Aleksandr Lukashenko, who claimed a sixth presidential term Sunday in an election nearly universally condemned as a farce. “As I have warned, there will be no Maidan, no matter how much anyone wants one,” he said on Monday, just as the protests began picking up steam.

But despite the similar, gruesome optics, the differences between the two uprisings far outweigh their similarities, though the two countries may both be neighbors and former Soviet Republics. Those differences make it harder to look to Ukraine as a potential road map for how the events in Belarus may unfold.

For starters, Belarus is a lot more authoritarian than Ukraine was or is.

In his quarter-century in power, Lukashenko has built a machine of repression that is a lot bigger, more pervasive, and nastier than anything in post-Soviet Ukraine—making the risks faced by protesters in Minsk and other cities a lot higher than they were six years ago in Ukraine.

In the three days since the presidential elections, deemed neither free nor fair by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the European Union’s Foreign Minister Josep Borrell, 6,000 people have been arrested, 250 injured, and one person is confirmed to have been killed. While the Ukrainian revolution ultimately claimed around 100 lives (not including over 13,000 people who died in years of low-intensity armed conflict in the eastern part of the country), the first deaths in Ukraine didn’t come until after protesters had been on the street for two months. Lukashenko didn’t wait two nights.

That highlights just how determined the Belarus authorities are to crush the incipient protests before they gain momentum—and the courage of protesters who are braving batons, rubber bullets, tear gas, and flash grenades. On Wednesday, the police in Belarus confirmed that they had used live ammunition against protesters in the city of Brest and that one person was injured.

“I didn’t expect such resilience from Belarusians, they’re amazing, simply amazing. Going and knowing they’re risking their lives, it’s simply beautiful,” said Andrei Sannikov, who ran against Lukashenko in the presidential election in 2010 and was later imprisoned for 16 months for organizing an anti-government protest following the sham vote. “You watch it with pride and tears in your eyes,” he said.

On Wednesday, protesters gathered outside a detention center in Minsk, where

they could hear the screams of detainees being beaten inside. “Hang in there,” the protesters chanted, according to the independent Russian media outlet *MediaZona*.

During his 26 years in power, Lukashenko has in many ways replicated the brute-force, centralized system of his Soviet predecessors. (Lukashenko was the manager of a collective pig farm in Soviet days). The country’s security services still go by their Soviet-era name, the KGB, whose elite Alpha Unit was deployed on the streets of Minsk amid the unrest.

Despite the risks, independent media outlets and civil society groups do operate in Belarus, but they face routine harassment by the authorities, stifling red tape, and the threat of arbitrary arrest. The main opposition candidate, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, had to flee the country after the vote, following an apparent threat against her children.

For another, Ukraine was actually sort of democratic when the Maidan protests broke out.

In 2014, Ukraine was rated as partly free by Freedom House. It was a problematic, backsliding democracy where corruption was endemic and violence against journalists was on the rise, but dissent was possible—and politics was not a one-man show.

“In 2013 [in Ukraine], you had a relatively vibrant civil society. You had a government which was a very soft authoritarian government,” said John Herbst, a former U.S. ambassador to Ukraine. “Belarus does not have a history of such civic resistance.”

Crucially, elections were largely free and fair in a way they have never been in Lukashenko’s Belarus. While the parliament was stacked with supporters of then-President Viktor Yanukovych, there was a lively opposition that quickly threw its support behind the protests. Even the downside of Ukrainian politics offered more space for maneuver. Ukraine’s oligarchs, who have long had an outsized and often troublesome role in the country’s politics, nevertheless served as an alternative base of power as they jockeyed for influence. Belarus’s wealthy business leaders have negligible political clout.

On the other hand, independent Ukraine was built on a ready-made fault line. Belarus isn’t.

The Ukrainian revolution strained historic and linguistic divides, which were only exacerbated by Russian disinformation and military support as the Kremlin helped foment war in eastern Ukraine, dispatching troops in unmarked uniforms as well as tanks and artillery. Western Ukraine, once part of the Austro-Hungarian empire, usually looked to the West—as evidenced in the strong support for an association agreement with the European Union in that part of the country, the very agreement that sparked the Maidan protests and crackdown in the first place. In contrast, the eastern part of the country, never gobbled up by the Habsburgs, has almost always been Russian-speaking and oriented toward Moscow. After the uprisings in 2014 that forced Yanukovych to flee to Russia, pro-Russian separatists in eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk staged independence referendums, going on to form proto-states highly dependent on Moscow's muscle and financial backing.

Belarus, in contrast, has little in the way of linguistic, religious, or ethnic divides for foreign actors like Russia to exploit. “Belarus almost never was split in terms of being part of different countries,” said Artyom Shraibman, a founder of the Minsk-based political consultancy Sense Analytics, save for the period after World War I when the country was split between Poland and the Soviet Union. “Before that, for centuries, Belarus was always part of one single nation,” he said, creating a fairly homogeneous population with a long-shared history.

Ukraine’s protesters had a clear goal. All that Belarusians have right now is anger and outrage.

The Ukrainian protesters had a clear aim: to steer the country in the direction of Europe and, by extension, toward a more democratic and prosperous future. The EU Association Agreement that caused the whole uproar would have made Ukraine, if not an EU member state, a trading partner with Western-style rules and regulations. In consequence, leaders of the protest movement quickly emerged.

A key distinction in Belarus is that the protests have no clear leader, Shraibman said. “This is more a protest of anger, than a conscious attempt at toppling the regime,” he said.

What coordination there is has largely centered around the secure messaging app Telegram, where popular channels share messages that warn protesters of police movements, guide demonstrators to certain neighborhoods, and encourage them

to use their cars to deliver supplies and block police vehicles. This diffuse coordination could actually make it harder for the security services to quash, said Katsiaryna Shmatsina, a political analyst with the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies.

“If we had one clear leader, especially if this leader was in Belarus, we don’t know how long he or she would have lasted,” Shmatsina said.

For all the differences between the two dramatic upheavals, there are some constants. Should Moscow decide to wade in, it has plenty of points of leverage —many of the same ones it has used against Ukraine—whether cutting off energy supplies, launching cyberattacks, or exploiting Russian-language media in a place where the Russian language still predominates.

“There’s a lot of pressure points there,” said Ben Hodges, who served from 2014 to 2017 as the commanding general of U.S. military forces in Europe.

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