



**FSU**  
FREE SPEECH UNION

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## Free Speech Union warns the Online Safety Bill will have a chilling effect on free speech

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Responding to the introduction of the Government's Online Safety Bill in Parliament, expected today, Toby Young, General Secretary of the Free Speech Union, said:

*"The Online Safety Bill fails to strike the right balance between the need to protect users from illegal content and the right to freedom of expression; that is a fundamental democratic right that needs stronger protection.*

*"The new regulatory regime created by the Bill incentivises providers to remove unorthodox opinions and contentious views. It includes some free speech protections, but the penalty for ignoring them will not be nearly as great as the penalties for failing to comply with the new safety duties. No social media company executive is going to be sent to jail for failing to uphold free speech. In the absence of more robust speech protections, this Bill is a censors' charter.*

*"We are particularly concerned that the government has said it will force social media platforms to remove 'legal but harmful' content, including 'harassment'. That will enable political activists and interest group claiming to speak on behalf of disadvantaged groups to silence their opponents by branding any views they disagree with as 'harassment'.*

*"The Government implicitly accepts that this Bill will have a chilling effect on free speech because it includes exemptions for politicians and journalists, asking social media companies to afford them greater latitude. This is an affront to democracy and we will be working closely with our allies across Parliament to help the Government improve the Bill."*

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