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June 11, 2020

Eric Yuan
CEO
Zoom
55 Almaden Boulevard, 6th Floor
San Jose, CA 95113

Dear Mr. Yuan:

One would have thought that a supposedly American company whose claim to fame is serving a fast, virtually seamless video chat would value free speech. But your company appears to have chosen censorship instead. Are you trying to curry favor with the Chinese Communist Party? Reports are trickling in that, in the last few weeks, you have censored many different accounts for discussing the Tiananmen Square protests and the subsequent massacre.

Just as disturbing is your defense that you censored these conversations and suspended accounts to “comply with local law.” As I am sure you know, “local law” in China is extraordinarily oppressive. China’s so-called “Cyber Security Law” requires companies that do business in China to hand over information to Party officials immediately on demand. In the past few months, additional, even more intrusive, provisions have taken effect. They require companies doing business in China to use network equipment approved by the Chinese Communist Party—equipment that allows Party officials to decrypt and access all data. These oppressive “local laws” are what Party officials use to oppress more than a billion people, including more than one million Uighurs who have been forced into slavery. These “local laws” are what China is using to crack down on protesters in Hong Kong who just want the basic liberties they were promised by international treaty.

Your defense also rings hollow because you have been caught subjecting Zoom calls to those laws unnecessarily. In April, users and watchdog groups discovered that your company was routing communications through servers in China. That routing was entirely unnecessary because none of the participants on those calls were based in China. Yet you still routed calls through China, knowing that, under “local law,” Party officials could access every bit of those calls. Your actions so far suggest not an innocent desire to comply with “local law,” but a desire to curry favor with the Chinese Communist Party so you can better access that market.

Yours is not the first company to trade American values for potential profits in China. Google, in particular, has become infamous for its censorship—from designing two

different censorship search engines and blocking terms critical of the Chinese Communist Party to its “errors” mistranslating terms to reframe criticisms of Beijing into praise for Beijing.

But trading American values for Beijing profits never ends well. The Chinese Communist Party has a long history of inviting American companies into its borders, only to steal proprietary information and technology and then repurpose that data for its own use. When you censor for the Communist Chinese Party, you may think it benefits you, but the only one who will benefit in the long run is the Chinese Communist Party.

One week ago today, I sent a letter to American companies like yours, asking them to put American principles and free nations around the world first. Apparently, you did not read that letter because you censored discussions about Tiananmen Square on the very same day. I reiterate today that it is time for you to pick a side: American principles and free-speech, or short-term global profits and censorship.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Josh Hawley
United States Senator