

DEMOCRACY IS BEING DESTROYED BY ELON MUSK AND BIG TECH OLIGARCHS

Amazon, Tesla and Meta among world's top companies undermining democracy - report

Corporations such as ExxonMobil and Blackstone also big funders of climate crisis, new trade union report finds

[Michael Sainato](#)

Some of the world's largest companies have been accused of undermining democracy across the world by financially backing far-right political movements, funding and exacerbating the climate crisis, and violating trade union rights and human rights in a report published on Monday by the International Trade Union Confederation ([ITUC](#)).

Amazon, Tesla, Meta, ExxonMobil, Blackstone, Vanguard and Glencore are the corporations included in the report. The companies' lobbying arms are attempting to shape global policy at the [United Nations Summit of the Future](#) in New York City on 22 and 23 September.

At [Amazon](#), the report notes the company's size and role as the fifth largest employer in the world and the largest online retailer and cloud computing service, has had a profound impact on the industries and communities it operates within.

"The company has become notorious for its [union busting](#) and [low wages](#) on multiple continents, monopoly in e-commerce, [egregious carbon emissions](#) through its AWS data centres, [corporate tax evasion](#), and lobbying at national and international level,"

states the report.

The report cites Amazon's high injury rates in the US, the company challenging the constitutionality of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), its [efforts](#) in Canada to overturn labor law, the [banning](#) of Amazon lobbyists from the European parliament for refusing to attend hearings on worker violations, and [refusal](#) to negotiate with unions in Germany, among other cases. Amazon has also [funded](#) far-right political groups' efforts to undermine women's rights and antitrust legislation, and its retail website has been [used](#) by hate groups to raise money and sell products.

At Tesla, the report cites anti-union opposition by the company in the US, Germany, and Sweden; human rights violations [within its supply chains](#); and Elon Musk's personal opposition to unions and [democracy](#), challenges to the NLRB in the US, and his [support](#) for the political leaders Donald Trump, [Javier Milei](#) in Argentina and [Narendra Modi](#) in India.

The report cites Meta, the largest social media company in the world, for its vast role in permitting and enabling far-right propaganda and movements to use its platforms to grow members and garner support in the US and abroad. It also cited retaliation from the company for regulatory measures in Canada, and [expensive lobbying efforts](#) against laws to regulate data privacy.

Glencore, the largest mining company in the world by revenue, was included in the report for its role in financing campaigns globally against Indigenous communities and activists.

Blackstone, the private equity firm led by Stephen Schwarzman, a billionaire [backer](#) of Donald Trump, was cited in the report for its roles in funding far-right political movements, investments in fossil fuel projects and deforestation in the Amazon.

"Blackstone's network has spent tens of millions of dollars supporting politicians and

political forces who promise to prevent or eliminate regulations that might hold it to account,” the report noted. Blackstone has disputed the Amazon deforestation claim and sold its remaining shares in the company in question in 2021. The company argued it does not make direct political contributions and that contributions from its executives are personal.

The Vanguard Group was included in the report due to its role in financing some of the world’s most anti-democratic corporations. [ExxonMobil](#) was cited for funding anti-climate science research and aggressive lobbying against environmental regulations.

Even in “robust democracies” workers’ demands “are overwhelmed by corporate lobbying operations, either in policymaking or the election in itself”, said Todd Brogan, director of campaigns and organizing at the ITUC.

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Even in “robust democracies” workers’ demands “are overwhelmed by corporate lobbying operations, either in policymaking or the election in itself”, said Todd Brogan, director of campaigns and organizing at the ITUC.

“This is about power, who has it, and who sets the agenda. We know as trade unionists that unless we’re organized, the boss sets the agenda in the workplace, and we know as citizens in our countries that unless we’re organized and demanding responsive governments that actually meet the needs of people, it’s corporate power that’s going to set the agenda.

“They’re playing the long game, and it’s a game about shifting power away from democracy at every level into one where they’re not concerned about the effects on workers – they’re concerned about maximizing their influence and their extractive power and their profit,” added Brogan. “Now is the time for international and multi-sectoral strategies, because these are, in many cases, multinational corporations that are more powerful than states, and they have no democratic accountability whatsoever, except for workers organized.”

The ITUC includes [labor group affiliates](#) from [169 nations](#) and territories around the world representing 191 million workers, including the AFL-CIO, the largest federation of labor unions in the US, and the Trades Union Congress in the UK.

With 4 billion people around the world set to participate in elections in 2024, the federation is [pushing](#) for an international binding treaty being worked on by the [Open-ended intergovernmental working group](#) to hold transnational corporations accountable under international human rights laws.

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- This article was amended on 24 September 2024 to reflect Blackstone’s position on claims made in the ITUC’s report.

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