



Written by [Veronika Kyrylenko](#) on September 18, 2025

When Protest Becomes a Crime: Trump Moves to Label Antifa Terrorists

Late on Wednesday, during his state visit to the United Kingdom, President Donald Trump dropped a declaration that reverberated far beyond diplomatic halls. From his Truth Social account [he wrote](#):

I am pleased to inform our many U.S.A. Patriots that I am designating ANTIFA, A SICK, DANGEROUS, RADICAL LEFT DISASTER, AS A MAJOR TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.



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He went further, vowing that those who fund Antifa should be “thoroughly investigated in accordance with the highest legal standards and practices.”

The announcement came in the shadow of conservative activist Charlie Kirk’s murder, which the administration cast as proof that left-wing political violence is immediate and real. In Trump’s framing, Antifa is no longer just a nuisance or rhetorical foil, but a national security threat demanding the full weight of legal action.

Yet the declaration raised more questions than it answered. What does it mean to brand a fluid, leaderless movement as a “terrorist organization”? What authority does a president actually have to make such a designation? And what safeguards remain to prevent civil liberties from being eroded in the name of security?

What Is Antifa?

Antifa, short for anti-fascists, is not a centralized organization. It has no formal structure or membership rosters. Instead, the term describes a range of loosely connected activists who mobilize against fascism, white supremacy, and authoritarianism. Some rely on peaceful protest, others embrace confrontational tactics, and many fall somewhere in between. The movement resists easy definition.

Because of this diffuse nature, debate often turns not only on Antifa’s tactics, but on what it actually is. Historian Mark Bray, author of *Antifa: The Anti-Fascist Handbook*, [explains](#):

Antifa is a kind of politics, not a specific group ... in the same way that there are feminist groups but feminism is not, itself, a group. Any group that calls itself antifa and promotes the basic principles of militant antifascism is an antifa group.

There is no general headquarters or leader to get official recognition from.

That perspective is echoed by Christopher Wray, former FBI director and Trump appointee. He [told Congress](#) in 2020 that Antifa is an ideology rather than a structured organization. That distinction



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matters. It determines how government can, or cannot, apply legal tools against it.

“Left-wing Terrorists”

Even as law enforcement urged caution, the White House moved quickly to cast the killing of Kirk as the work of “radical left terrorists.” It presented the tragedy not as the act of a lone individual but as proof of a coordinated underground campaign.

In the immediate aftermath of the assassination — before investigators had even identified a suspect — President Trump [addressed the nation](#).

“Radical-left political violence has hurt too many innocent people and taken too many lives,” he said on September 10. He went further, blaming “the hateful rhetoric” that “compared wonderful Americans like Charlie to Nazis.” It is “directly responsible for the terrorism that we’re seeing in our country today, and it must stop right now.”

Trump vowed that his administration would find “each and every one of those who contributed to this atrocity and to other political violence, including the organizations that funded and supported [it].”

Stephen Miller, deputy chief of staff and one of Trump’s closest advisors, [underscored](#) the point on Monday:

We are going to channel all the anger we have over the organized campaign that led to this assassination to uproot and dismantle these terrorist networks. With God as my witness, we are going to use every resource we have at the Department of Justice, Homeland Security and throughout this government to identify, disrupt, dismantle and destroy these networks, and make America safe again for the American people. It will happen, and we will do it in Charlie’s name.

Other senior figures, including Vice President J.D. Vance, echoed that language. Vance promised that the administration would “go after the NGO network that foments, facilitates and engages in violence.”

Attorney General Pam Bondi [stated](#) that the Department of Justice (DOJ) will “absolutely” target groups engaged in “hate speech.” After receiving backlash, though, she clarified that she meant incitement of violence.

Who Killed Kirk?

The certainty of these declarations stands in stark contrast to what investigators have actually said. Police officials maintain that the suspect appeared to have acted alone. So far, no evidence has been made public that ties the assassination to any organized group. Investigators have also noted that the suspect is not cooperating, leaving key questions about motive unanswered.

At the same time, the official narrative received a boost from widely publicized yet unverified claims. For instance, an internal police bulletin claimed that ammunition used in the Kirk assassination was engraved with “transgender and anti-fascist ideology.” This detail was pushed into the spotlight by pundit [Steven Crowder](#), but the claim unraveled almost immediately. Law enforcement officials [told](#) *The New York Times* the report had not been verified by Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) analysts and may have been misread. Later reports [indicated](#) that the supposed “transgender” link came from a series of arrows etched on the rounds — an unconfirmed interpretation



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that remains under review.

At the same time, some investigative reporting has suggested a more complex backdrop. Max Blumenthal of The Grayzone argues in his [widely shared exposé](#) that Kirk, one of the most influential voices in the conservative media landscape, had begun to openly question U.S. involvement in foreign conflicts (particularly in Israel), a shift that unsettled certain external actors who had once been major financial backers of his early career. Blumenthal raised the question of whether these shifts in U.S. conservative discourse played a role in the tensions surrounding his death.

Surveillance, Infiltration, False Flags

In recent years, U.S. agencies have kept Antifa under watch. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) circulated [bulletins](#) labeling protests “Violent Antifa anarchist-inspired,” though later reviews found many claims thin or politically driven. Police shared lists of suspected activists and attached the “Antifa” label even when proof was weak. Undercover agents or informants have sometimes claimed to have infiltrated protest networks. But no credible evidence has yet emerged of centralized Antifa command or coordination.

This is where narratives risk becoming self-fulfilling. Once a diffuse ideology is treated as a terrorist enemy, any act of violence can be pinned on “radical leftists,” whether or not evidence supports it. The risk of false flags — where provocations by infiltrators or external actors are used to discredit opponents — is not theoretical. History shows the danger. Italy’s Operation Gladio fostered a “strategy of tension,” with acts of violence blamed on leftists to steer politics rightward. In the United States, [COINTELPRO](#) infiltrated and disrupted civil rights and anti-war groups, using disinformation and provocation that were later condemned as abuses of power.

With Trump’s call to designate Antifa a terrorist organization, the risk is clear. Such a label can become a blunt instrument — silencing dissent, chilling protest, and stretching “threat” to cover speech or assembly. In a climate of fear and confusion, the burden of proof can sink dangerously low.

Law and Limits

U.S. law does not allow domestic groups to be designated as terrorist organizations in the same way the State Department blacklists foreign entities. [The First Amendment](#) protects even radical or unpopular speech, and courts require evidence of concrete violence, not mere association. Individuals who commit crimes can be prosecuted, networks that fund violence can be investigated, and incitement to imminent lawless action can be punished. But sweeping designations for a loose, leaderless movement blur those distinctions and invite constitutional challenge.

Between Protection and Overreach

Political violence, radicalism, polarization, and instability are real dangers. But trusting an ever-expanding security state to handle them risks feeding the very crisis it claims to cure. Every new dollar funneled into federal policing, every creep of executive power, strengthens a machine that will outlast its architects and steadily erode the freedoms it pretends to defend.

Too often Americans forget that this machine is bipartisan. Its apparent contradictions are not hypocrisy — they reveal a political class that believes in nothing beyond survival and concentration of power. The loudest voices in Washington and their media allies are not principled actors, but conditioned partisans. They recycle slogans to keep their bases agitated and pitted against each other.



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The result is a permanent distraction from the elites who control the narratives and profit from the chaos.

History shows that states that wage wars against loosely defined domestic enemies rarely stop with their first target. Eventually, anyone can be labeled “Antifa.”

America’s challenge, therefore, is not only to protect itself from violence, but to resist the lure of fear as a pretext for the expansion of state violence. Because once the government rebrands dissent as terrorism, the Republic will already have surrendered more than any enemy could seize by force.

The author acknowledges that Antifa groups are frequently used to advance destructive agendas of chaos and division. At the same time, she strongly believes in Frédéric Bastiat’s warning that the poison and the antidote are too often brewed in the same laboratory — manufactured disorder on one side, and the expansion of state power on the other.

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