

USAID Staff warned - no talk! Devex, 19 Feb 2025

Free speech?

Mark Kevin Lloyd is back at USAID — [warning staff that talking to the press could get them fired](#). “Unauthorized engagement externally with the press or others is subject to discipline, including dismissal,” he wrote in a Feb. 13 memo obtained by Devex. Now performing the duties of assistant administrator for USAID’s Bureau of Global Health, he replaces [Dr. Atul Gawande](#).

Lloyd dismissed media reports on the [State Department’s waiver system](#) as a “false narrative,” insisting lifesaving aid “continued uninterrupted and was never paused.” But USAID’s payment system, Phoenix, has been down, stalling funds. One Kenyan partner organization, despite a PEPFAR waiver, [has had “no funds to operate.”](#)

Rep. Joaquin Castro confirmed the funding freeze: “The Phoenix system is not operating. ... **No one is getting funded** even though the waiver has been granted.”

This isn’t Lloyd’s first USAID stint. Appointed in 2020 during the first Trump administration, he faced backlash for calling Islam a “barbaric cult” and linking former U.S. President Barack Obama to the Muslim Brotherhood. His social media posts target abortion, LGBTQ+ rights, and encourage deportations, with comments comparing Democrats to Nazis and referring to Kamala Harris as a parasite.

Despite his gag order, Lloyd has championed “free speech” online, posting quotes from Elon Musk and others against censorship. CNN also uncovered a 2010 remark where he suggested armed revolt if the Tea Party lost: “If it isn’t the ballot, at some point, it will be a bullet.”

[USAID](#) and Lloyd have not responded to Devex’s requests for comment.