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IMMIGRATION

Trump administration sets lowest-ever cap on refugee admissions to U.S.

UPDATED OCTOBER 30, 2025 · 5:19 PM ET


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 Ximena Bustillo

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In this photograph taken on September 2, 2025, Afghan refugee girl Shayma is pictured during an interview with AFP at her residence in Islamabad. Her family had been scheduled to fly to the U.S. in February, before the Trump administration's new refugee admissions.

Farooq Naeem/AFP via Getty Images

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The Trump administration is drastically cutting the number of refugees it will admit to the U.S., capping it at **7,500** for the current fiscal year. That's the lowest since the U.S. refugee program was established in 1980.



The U.S. wants to primarily admit Afrikaners from South Africa, according to a notification in the Federal Register filed on Thursday, and "other victims of illegal or unjust discrimination in their respective homelands."

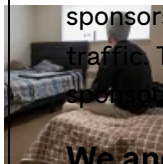
The administration has largely paused the U.S. refugee resettlement program so far this year, with the exception of a streamlined process of resettlement for white South Africans. Several hundred from the group have been resettled across the U.S. since March.

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NATIONAL

Trump freeze on resettlement funding leaves new refugees scrambling to adjust in U.S.

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In response, some resettlement groups have been quick to voice concern over the lack of resources and limits on admission of those from other countries. Others have shuttered their services, changing the landscape of the refugee resettlement process.

Thursday's notification, which covers the fiscal year that started October 1, does not provide a reason for the lower cap, beyond mentioning previous Trump administration policies on refugees, including pausing admissions overall and barring admissions from U.S. security and welfare.

"The Trump administration has long expressed its intention to end Biden's abuse of the refugee program," a Trump administration official said in a statement. "No refugees will be admitted in [fiscal year] 26 until the appropriate consultations with Congress are held, which are being delayed because certain members of Congress insisted on shutting down the government."

Christopher Landau, the deputy secretary of state, previously told reporters that criteria for bringing in refugees included making sure that they did not pose a national security challenge and could be easily assimilated.

IMMIGRATION
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First Afrikaners arrive in U.S. under radically redrawn refugee program

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This decision doesn't just lower the refugee admissions ceiling. It lowers our moral standing." Kaish O'Mara Vignarajah, president of Global Refuge, said in a statement. At a time of crisis in countries ranging from Afghanistan to Venezuela to Sudan and beyond, concentrating the vast majority of admissions on one group undermines the program's purpose as well as its credibility.

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The Biden administration had set the refugee cap at 125,000 for fiscal year 2025. Senate Democrats, including Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-N.H.), the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said the Trump administration disobeyed the law by not consulting with Congress on the refugee cap before imposing it.

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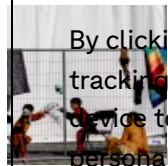
The administration's lack of consultation "demonstrates its tacit acknowledgement that this decision is indefensible," they wrote in a statement. "President Trump's move undermines the role that America has long played in the world as a beacon of stability and a refuge for those fleeing genocide, political persecution and war crimes."

Push for higher caps

Refugee advocates have spent the year pushing for a broader range of admissions beyond Afrikaners, including admitting people from other countries who had already been vetted to arrive in the U.S.

"It is egregious to exclude refugees who completed years of rigorous security checks and are currently stuck in dangerous and precarious situations," said Sharif Aly, president of the International Refugee Assistance Project. He said that the number of those with confirmed travel plans to the U.S. is greater than the new refugee cap.

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NATIONAL SECURITY

Hundreds laid off, thousands of refugees risk losing benefits during federal pause

The admission of Afrikaners to the U.S. has drawn scrutiny from resettlement agencies in the U.S., who have faced sharp budget, resource, and personnel cuts since President Trump took office.

Among his first executive actions, Trump paused the refugee resettlement program. Various agencies including the State Department have also paused disbursing funding for critical services for other refugees, such as the home, job and school assistance the Afrikaners are poised to receive.

The pause also sent the refugee resettlement agencies into turmoil as refugees already cleared to arrive in the U.S. received notice their flights had been cancelled.

POLITICS

Trump's freeze on refugee programs is an issue for Republicans wanting to help Afghans

Among those left in limbo were Afghans who worked with the U.S. military, a move that some Republicans have criticized. A lower-court judge had ordered the government to at least resume the refugee program for those who had already been approved to travel, but an appeals court ruled in favor of the administration.

The notice in the Federal Register makes no mention of Afghans, despite past promises to help those who supported the U.S. in America's longest war.

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NPR's Michele Kelemen contributed to this report.

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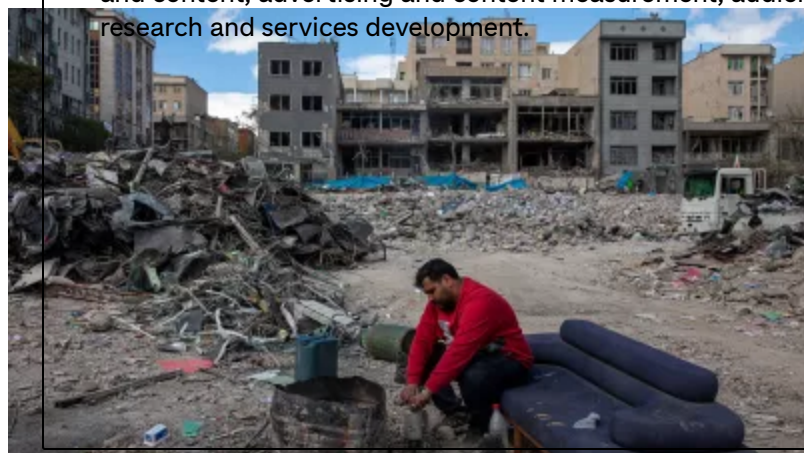
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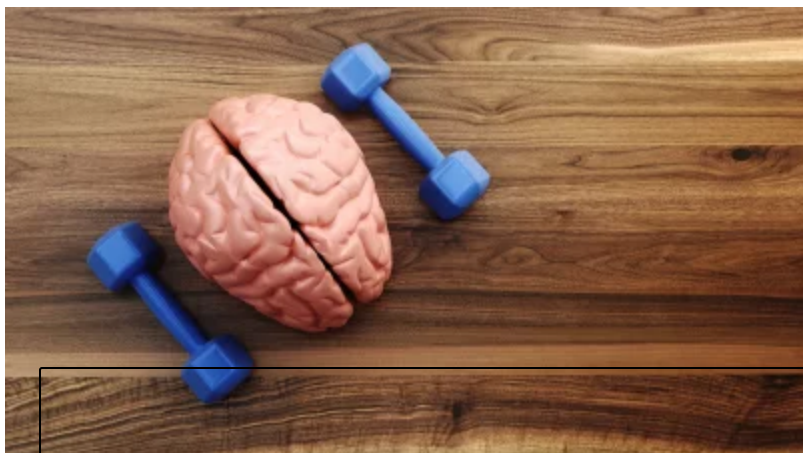
POP CULTURE HAPPY HOUR

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The embarrassing truth of dating men : Pop Culture Happy Hour



U.S. and Iran agree to 2-week ceasefire, suspending Trump's threat to annihilate Iran



This form of mental exercise may cut dementia risk for decades

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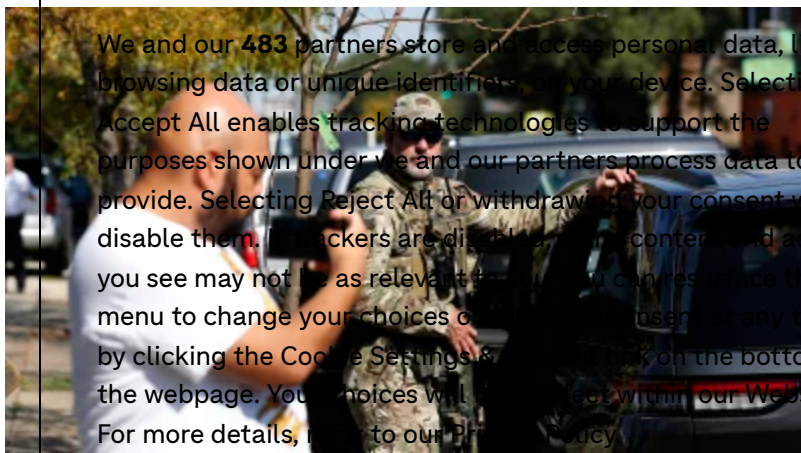
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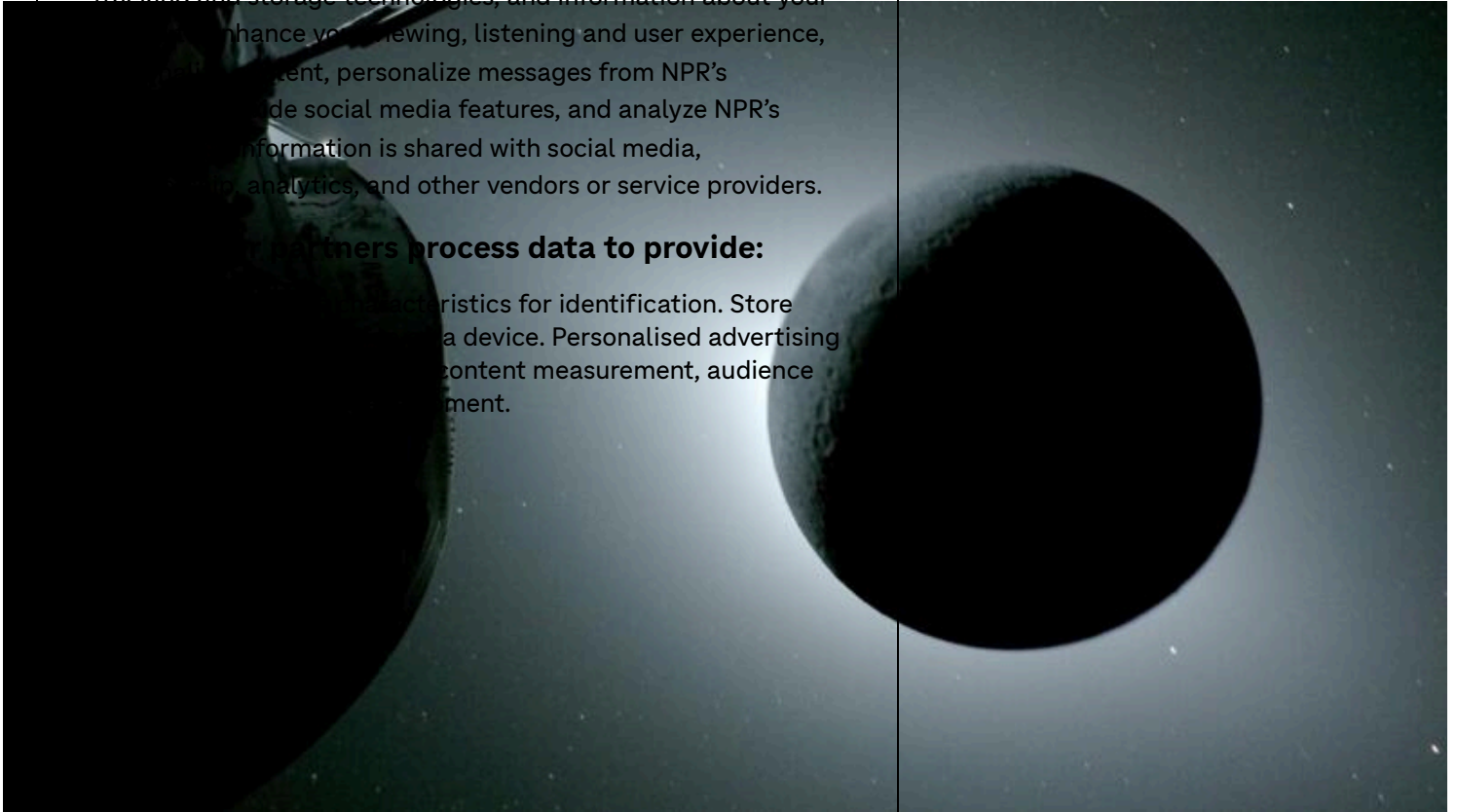
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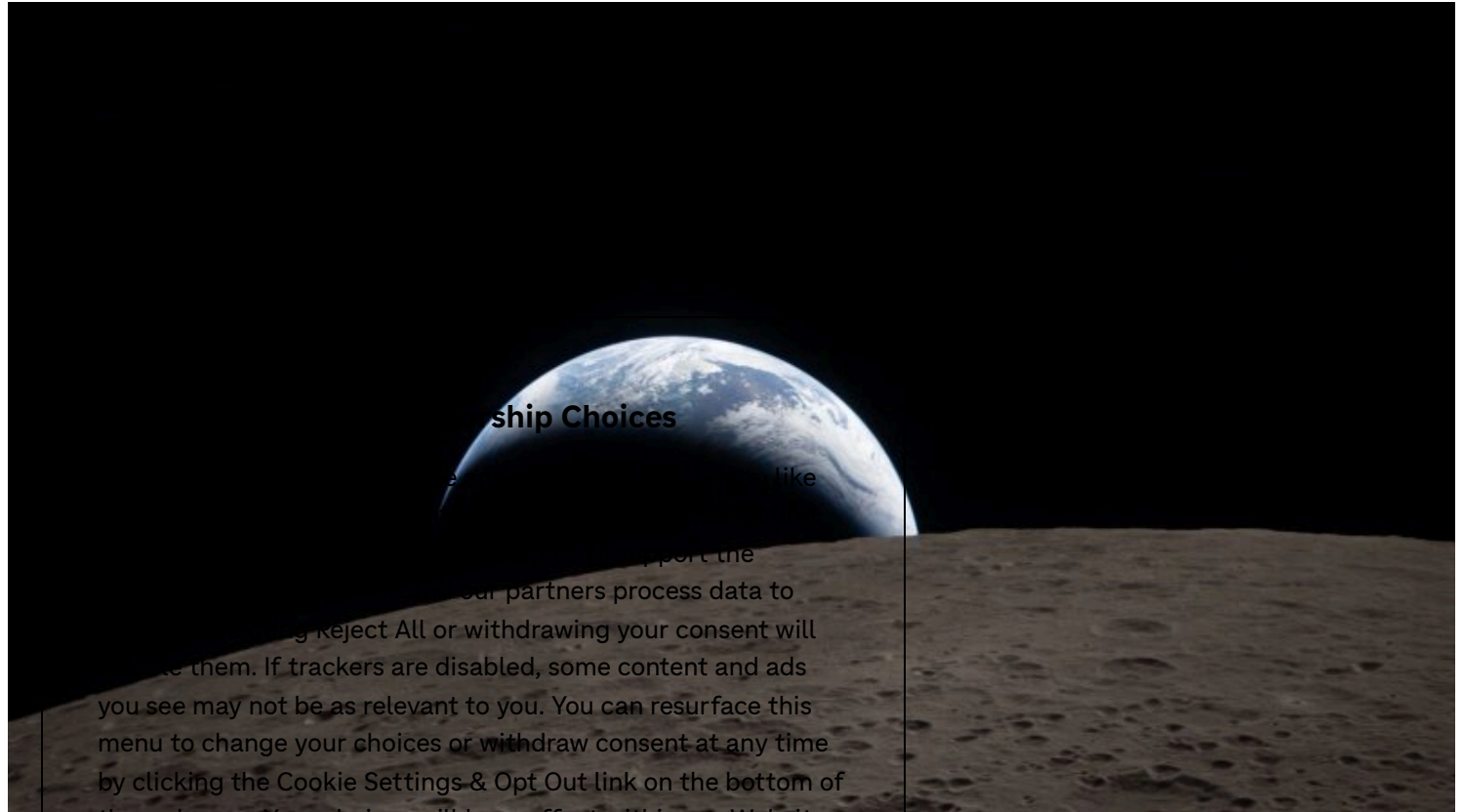
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THE PICTURE SHOW

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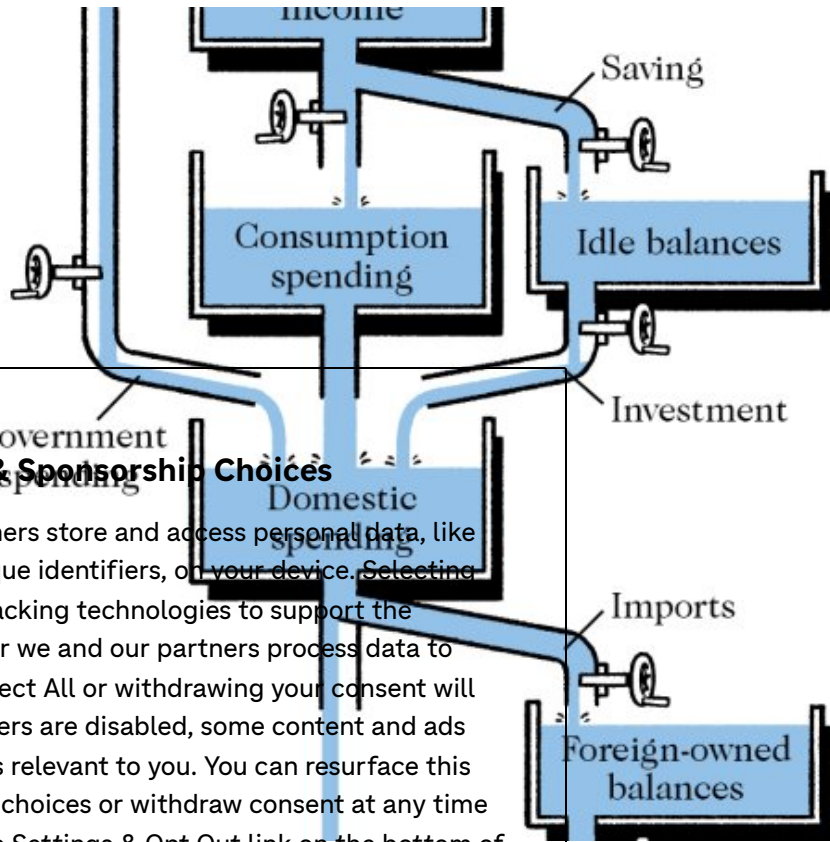
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PLANET MONEY NEWSLETTER

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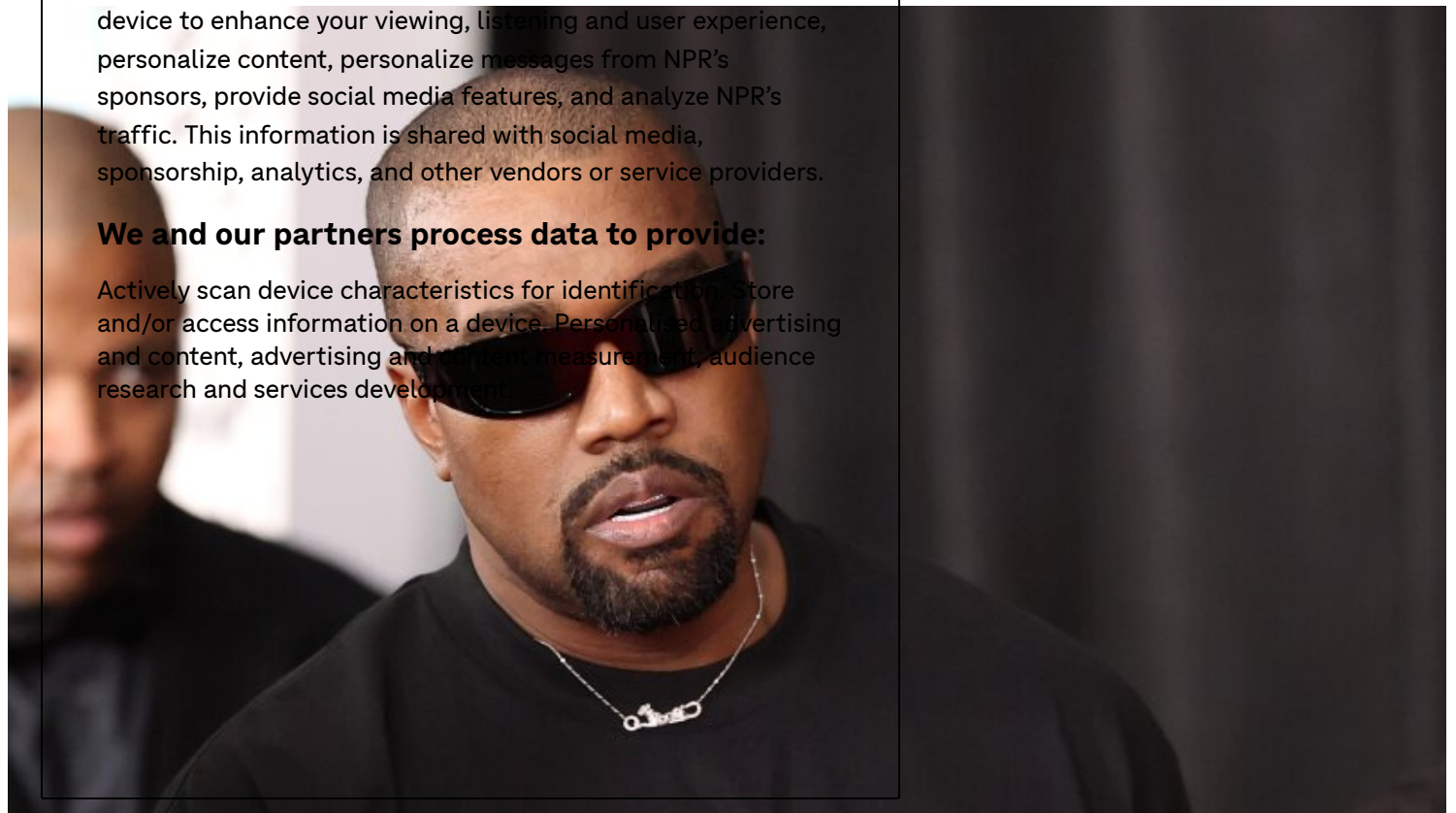
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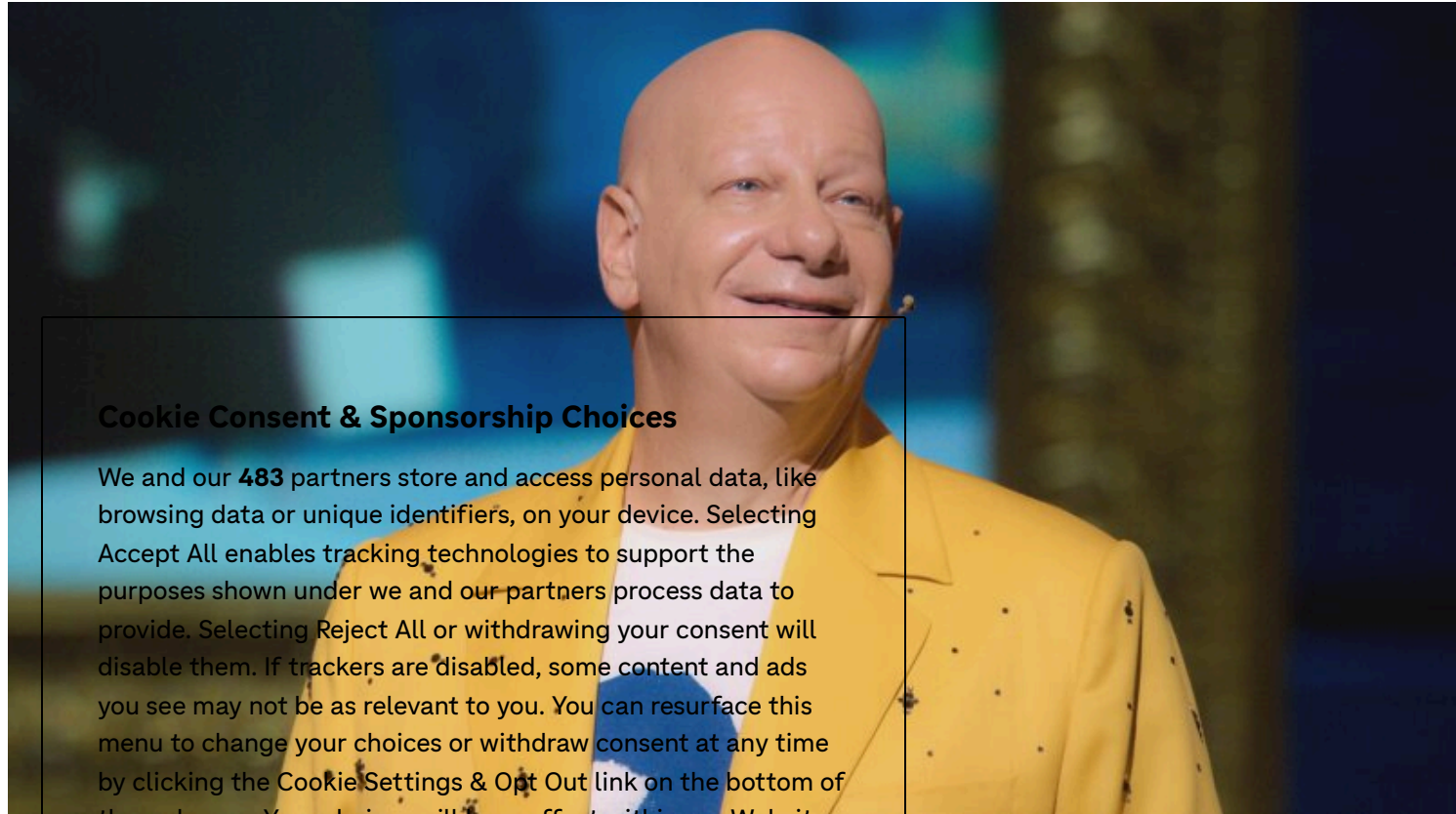
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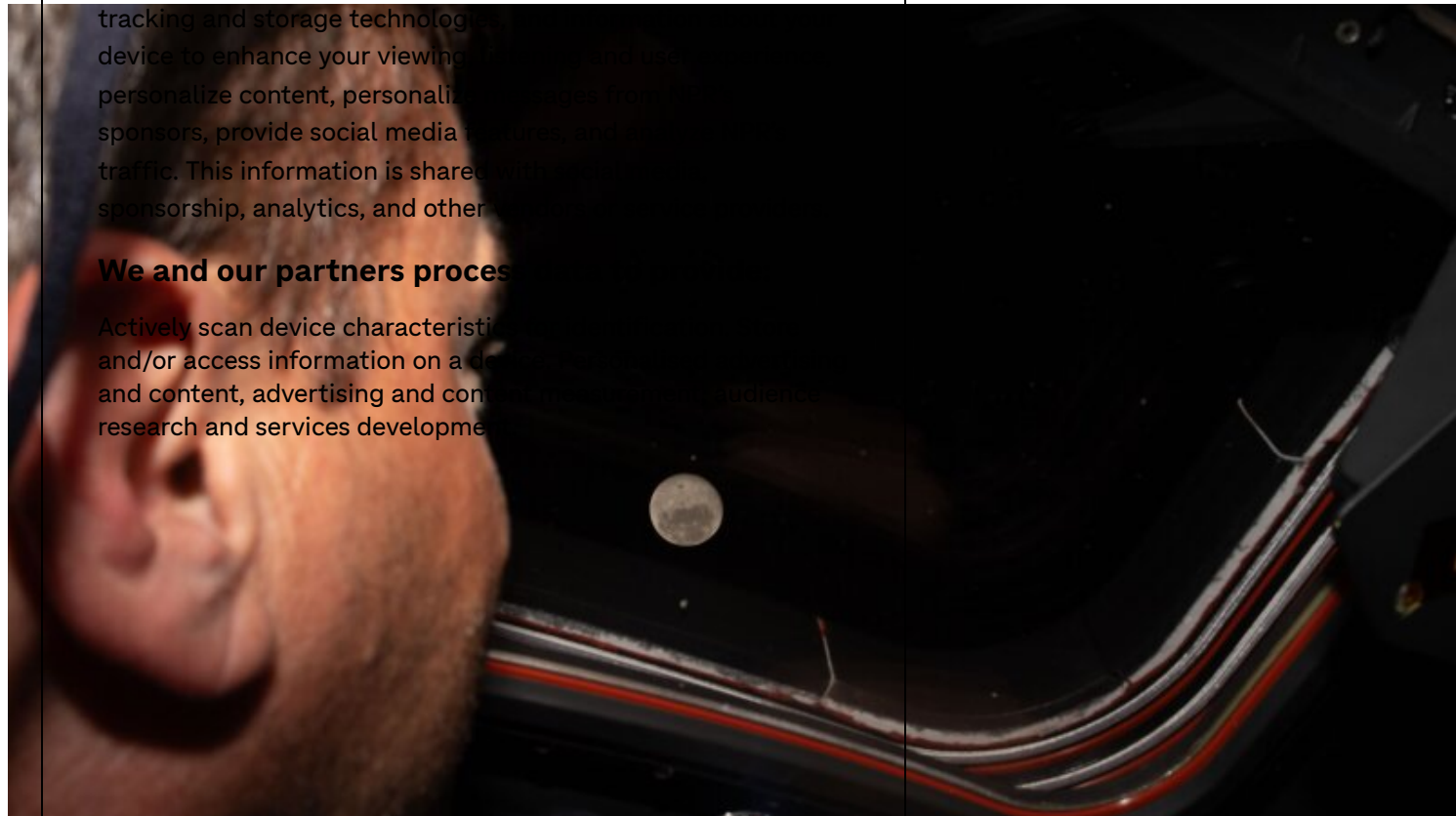
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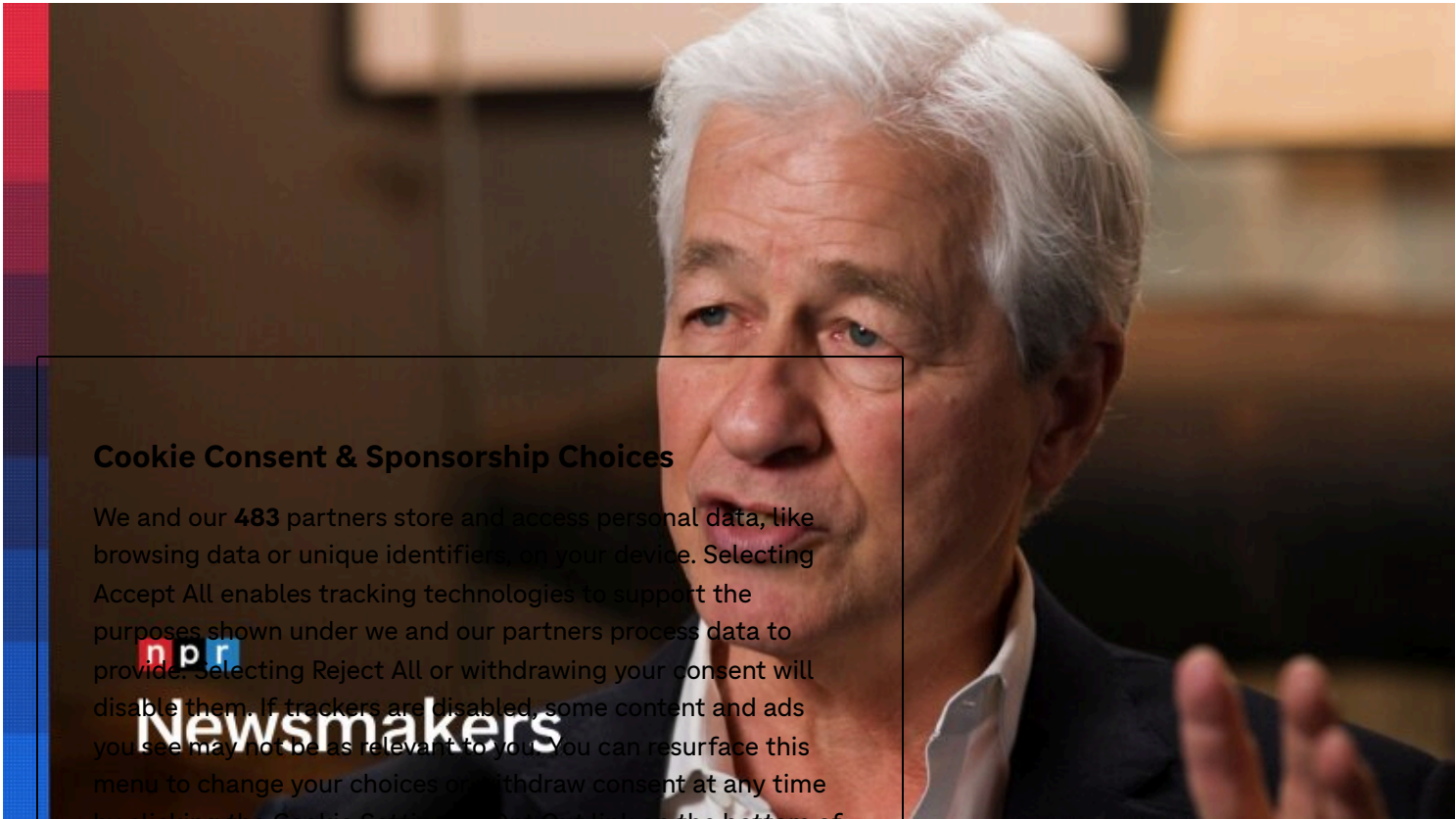
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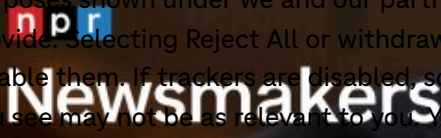
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