

To the Editor March 9, 2020

Free Chelsea Manning *Updated*

This is a long sad story. Long, because it has been going on for more than a decade now. Sad, because of the damage that has been done to one of our brightest patriotic young citizens, and because it reveals the extent, to which our government will go to preserve, protect, and cover up its evil methods and ramifications of its Empire building quests.

Chelsea Manning, formerly Bradley Manning, was jailed in July 2013. She was punished for revealing evidence of U.S war crimes (Collateral Murder video) and in the Afghan War Diary and Iraqi War Logs, and diplomatic cable messages. The Afghan War Diary disclosed of a collection of internal U.S. military logs of the War in Afghanistan. The Iraqi War logs showed that out of 109,000-recorded deaths in the Iraq War, 66,081 were civilians. The US diplomatic cables exposed American imperialist intrigues and conspiracies in dozens of countries.

Manning, a whistleblower, admitted to leaking these thousands of classified Pentagon documents and State Department cables to Julian Assange, a publisher who through WikiLeaks helped make the public revelations of US government activities. WikiLeaks as an online publisher also worked with print news outlets, including the US New York Times, the British Guardian, and the German Der Spiegel newspapers, to publish this series of documents leaked by Manning.

As an intelligence analyst deployed in Iraq, Manning was able to obtain information documenting innumerable crimes and conspiracies, including footage of the May 4, 2009 airstrike in Granai, Afghanistan, which killed up to 147 Afghan civilians.

Note: The video "Collateral Murder" is cockpit video of the July 12, 2007 US helicopter airstrike in Baghdad that killed 16 unarmed civilians, including two Reuters journalists, in cold blood.

She was convicted for something that happens on a smaller scale every day in Washington: handing **journalists** classified information. She was sentenced to 35 years in a military prison for an act of conscience in revealing these United States military secrets.

https://www.reddit.com/r/WikiLeaks/comments/b0c5if/wikileaks_editor_every_day_chelsea_manning/

An Information Review Task Force by the Pentagon subsequently confirmed that they had uncovered no specific examples of anyone who had lost his or her life in reprisals, that followed the publication of the Manning disclosures via WikiLeaks.

https://www.cjr.org/opinion/when_will_courts_realize_that_leaks_are_vital_to_the_american_public.php

She was held in solitary confinement both before and after trial, and then served seven years in United States military prison. Her 35-year sentence was commuted by President Obama in May 2010. While in prison, she was subjected to punitive measures that the United Nations said were tantamount to torture, driving her to attempt suicide on two occasions.

Alex Hills of Candles4Assange said, "Whether you believe Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange are political prisoners, or criminals for revealing state secrets, the original US military war crimes remain unaddressed and unpunished. Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning have sacrificed their lives to reveal

these crimes against humanity and the only ones in jail are them." No one involved in the planning or execution of this mass murder and criminality has been charged, let alone convicted and jailed. But Manning, then an army private who felt morally compelled to tell the world about these crimes, is once again behind bars. Assange remains in a London high security prison, in very ill health.

Chelsea Manning was summoned to appear and give testimony before a federal grand jury. The grand jury was related to her 2010 disclosures of information about the nature of asymmetric warfare to the public. Following in the footsteps of scores of other activists, Chelsea refused to testify in front of the grand jury, and is currently incarcerated for civil contempt.

Despite being offered immunity, Manning took a brave and principled stand by refusing to testify in the Star Chamber proceeding against Assange, who remains imprisoned in the London while the United States and Britain plan to have him evicted and extradited to the US to face espionage and/or conspiracy charges that could result in his execution. Chelsea Manning in jail is being fined \$1000 a day and will owe \$440,000 by October 2020, for refusing to testify against Julian Assange.

What are grand juries?

Grand juries are used to establish "probable cause" that a felony offense has been committed. Prosecutors run the proceedings behind closed doors, without a judge or defense attorney present. The whole process is rigged to favor indictment of the individual accused of a crime. They have also been used historically to oppress and frighten targeted groups, in particular, people perceived as dissidents and activists.

Why Resist a grand jury?

Due to their secretive nature and limitless subpoena power, the government has utilized grand jury processes as tools for garnering information about movements by questioning witnesses behind closed doors. Since testimony before grand juries is secret, grand juries can create fear by suggesting that some members of a political community may be secretly cooperating with the government. In this way, grand juries can seed suspicion and fear in activist communities.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer publicly released a letter accusing the United States of submitting Manning to treatment that is tantamount to torture. "Such deprivation of liberty does not constitute a circumscribed sanction for a specific offense, but an open-ended progressively severe measure of coercion," Melzer, the U.N. special rapporteur, wrote of Manning's treatment. Melzer's letter, stated that Manning's coercive imprisonment fulfills "all the constitutive elements of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" and "should be discontinued or abolished without delay." The letter asks that the U.S. government provide factual and legal grounds for Manning's ongoing imprisonment and fines, "especially after her categorical and persistent refusal to give testimony demonstrates the lack of their coercive effect."

Manning has not been charged with or convicted of a crime. And her imprisonment on the grounds of "civil contempt" is explicitly coercive: If she agrees to testify, she can walk free. If she continues to remain silent, she can be held for the 18-month duration of the grand jury or, as the U.N. official noted, **"indefinitely with the subsequent establishment of successive grand juries."**

Manning has made clear, she would “rather starve to death” than comply with the repressive grand jury system, a judicial black box historically deployed against social justice movements.

So this is just all about the government trying to get a second bite of the apple, and comes dangerously close to Double jeopardy which forbids a defendant from being tried again on the same or similar charges following a legitimate acquittal or conviction.

<https://theintercept.com/2020/01/02/chelsea-manning-torture-prison-united-nations/>

I urge all readers: Join the struggle to free Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange by attending the meeting or rally in your area! <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2019/03/11/pers-m11.html>

Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning are class-war prisoners. They are imprisoned because the financial oligarchies that dominate the United States and the world see their efforts to inform the public about state crimes and conspiracies as an existential threat to their continued rule.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chelsea_Manning

Free Chelsea Manning!

Update

Chelsea Manning this week reaffirmed that she would [not cooperate](#) with a government’s demand that she testify before a grand jury investigating WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

“My long-standing objection to the immoral practice of throwing people in jail without charge or trial, for the sole purpose of forcing them to testify before a secret, government-run investigative panel, remains strong,” Manning said in a statement obtained by Law&Crime. “Nearly every other legal system in the world condemns coercive confinement, and long ago replaced secret grand juries with public hearings. I am thrilled to see the practice of coercive confinement called out for what it is: incompatible with international human rights standards. Regardless, even knowing I am very likely to stay in jail for an even longer time, I’m never backing down.”