

APC statement on Bradley Manning: Guilty verdict a new low for US human rights

NEW YORK, August 5 2013 - APC, as a network that has endeavoured to use information technology for justice for the last 23 years stands in solidarity with Bradley Manning, a whistleblower who has been convicted in a military court on Espionage Act violations after leaking intelligence information on the Iraq War, where he worked in information systems as an intelligence analyst. The US government's refusal to acknowledge that Bradley Manning is a legitimate whistleblower is evidence that while the US positions itself as a global defender of fundamental rights and freedoms, it is acting to limit them in its own backyard.

APC believes that the ability to use the internet to make governments more accountable and transparent at global and national levels should be promoted and protected. Without whistleblowers such as Bradley Manning, the public cannot effectively fight against corruption, rights violations and the abuse of power by governments, armed forces and corporations.

"That Bradley Manning is facing up to 136 years of jail is a gross violation of human rights and seems clearly aimed at intimidating other potential whistleblowers," said Anriette Esterhuysen, APC Executive Director. While it has been considered a relief that he was acquitted of the most severe charge, "aiding the enemy," which could have put him on a death row, Manning remains a political prisoner. Meanwhile, his leaked proof of torture and other serious human rights violations have been ignored by the United States government.

Other developments, such as the charges of espionage filed against Edward Snowden and intentions of prosecution of Julian Assange by the US government, shows that prosecution of whistleblowers by the current US administration is unprecedented and as domestic and foreign policy must be reconsidered¹. Criminalisation of whistleblowing compromises investigative journalism and violates international human rights standards of freedom of expression. Manning and other whistleblowers who disclose information on matters that have implications for human rights and other issues of public interest should be protected from legal prosecution.

The APC Internet Rights Charter clearly states that:

- The internet must be protected from all attempts to silence critical voices and to censor social and political content or debate.
- Organisations, communities and individuals should be free to use the internet to organise and engage in protest.
- All information, including scientific and social research, that is produced with the support of public funds should be freely available to all.
- National and local government, and publicly-funded international organisations, must ensure transparency and accountability by placing publicly relevant information that they produce and manage in the public domain.

APC, with other civil society organisations, believes that the US and other States are failing to ensure that laws and regulations related to communications surveillance adhere to international human rights and adequately protect the rights to privacy and freedom of expression, and

invites individuals and organisations to endorse the International principles on the application of human rights to communications surveillance (<https://en.necessaryandproportionate.org>)

APC, as part of the BestBits coalition, has also endorsed a documenting on the United States government targeting non-U.S. [ersons, and invites other organisations to join the call (<http://bestbits.net/pcllob/>)

More information:

- Bradley Manning Acquitted of 'Aiding the Enemy', by Amnesty international
- <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/bradley-manning-acquitted-of-aiding-the-enemy>
- Human Rights Watch Statement on Bradley Manning
- <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/07/30/human-rights-watch-statement-bradley-manning>
- Bradley Manning: Victim of state oppression, by Article 19
- <http://www.article19.org/resources.php/resource/37185/en/bradley-manning:-victim-of-state-oppression>