# US government demands Twitter account information of WikiLeaks and followers

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The US Department of Justice has issued a court order to Twitter, the social networking site, demanding that it hand over information on WikiLeaks and its collaborators. WikiLeaks said that the subpoena, if not blocked, will grant the government access to the names of the more than 600,000 people who follow WikiLeaks over the network.

The subpoena, issued December 14, covers all official Twitter accounts of WikiLeaks, as well as the personal accounts of Brigitta Jonsdottir, a member of the Icelandic parliament, and WikiLeaks collaborators Rop Gonggrijp and Jacob Appelbaum. The order also requests all information on Pfc. Bradley Manning—who the US government claims leaked information through WikiLeaks—and WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

The government is demanding that Twitter hand over mailing addresses and billing information, IP addresses used to access Twitter, as well as bank records and credit card information.

The subpoena provoked an uproar in Iceland, where the foreign minister summoned the US ambassador for an explanation. "[It is] very serious that a foreign state, the United States, demands such personal information of an Icelandic person, an elected official," said Interior Minister Ogmundur Jonasson in a press interview with the Icelandic National Broadcasting Service.

This concern is heightened, Jonasson said, when "put [in] perspective and concerns freedom of speech and people's freedom in general."

Ms. Jonsdottir denounced the subpoena in a telephone interview with the WSWS on Sunday. "There is no criminal case against me because I have done nothing in violation of any law," she stated.

"The US government is trying to criminalize whistleblowing and publication of whistleblowing," Jonsdottir added. "They want to make it tantamount to spying, and if they succeed in doing that, journalists could be prosecuted just for doing their jobs."

Jonsdottir and Gonggrijp, together with Julian Assange, are listed as the producers of the Collateral Murder video released in April, which shows the slaughter of unarmed people, including two Reuters journalists, by a US helicopter gunship in Baghdad in 2007.

In addition to the information on WikiLeaks and its collaborators, the subpoena also demands "non-content information associated with the contents of any communications … stored by or for the accounts(s), such as destination email addresses." If Twitter posts are interpreted as messages, that means that Twitter will be obliged to turn over the names of all of WikiLeaks' followers.

WikiLeaks issued a warning on its Twitter feed Sunday that "all 637,000 @wikileaks followers are a target of US gov subpoena against Twitter."

The subpoena ordered Twitter not to disclose that it had been served with the subpoena. Twitter's lawyers asked the district court to remove those secrecy provisions, which it did on January 5. Twitter then advised the subjects that if they did not challenge the subpoenas in court within 10 days, it would turn over the requested material.

Thus far, Twitter is the only social networking site that has reported being subpoenaed in relation to the investigation of WikiLeaks. However, WikiLeaks and Ms. Jonsdottir said they suspect Facebook, Google and other companies received similar subpoenas, but quietly complied.

"If Twitter had not fought to unseal the subpoena, then we would never have known any of this," said

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Jonsdottir. “I'm waiting for similar letters from Facebook, Google and Skype, because I would like to know if they have also been subpoenaed.”

WikiLeaks issued a statement demanding that Facebook and Google make public any subpoenas they received. “Today, the existence of a secret US government grand jury espionage investigation into WikiLeaks was confirmed for the first time as a subpoena was brought into the public domain,” the organization said in a statement.

Jonsdottir said there would be a worldwide uproar if any country besides the United States demanded this type of information of a foreign MP. “I am in the International Network of Parliamentarians on Tibet. What would the world think if China demanded my computer records based on the idea that I was supporting terrorist monks?” she said.

Julian Assange condemned the court order in a statement Saturday. “If the Iranian government was to attempt to coercively obtain this information from journalists and activists of foreign nations, human rights groups around the world would speak out," he told the Associated Press.

There is reason to suspect that the US government has already collected part of this data through its illegal wiretapping and secret subpoenas. As Jacob Appelbaum, a security specialist listed in the subpoena, posted on his Twitter page, “I wonder if the subpoena is merely a front to legally introduce evidence captured by the confirmed NSA wiretaps two blocks from Twitter HQ.”

Jonsdottir and WikiLeaks have said they intend to wage a legal fight to keep Twitter from handing over the data.

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