

Free Bradley Manning!

**Jerry White, SEP candidate for US president
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As the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for US president, I condemn the persecution of Bradley Manning and demand his immediate release.

Manning's formal arraignment is scheduled for Thursday, where he will be charged with 22 counts, including that of "aiding the enemy." If convicted, he faces a possible sentence of death, though military prosecutors have said that they will seek "only" life in prison.

Manning has been held for more than one and a half years, and was subject to months of solitary confinement, forced nakedness, sleep deprivation and other cruelties amounting to torture. His confinement far exceeds the mandate that court-martials be held within 120 days of arrest, and contravenes the constitutional right to a speedy trial.

The court martial proceedings are intended to prevent any real examination of the fundamental political issues involved, while destroying the life of this young man as an object lesson for anyone who seeks to reveal the crimes of the US military.

Manning is alleged to have provided WikiLeaks with hundreds of thousands of documents on US machinations abroad, as well as a video depicting a military helicopter massacring Iraqi civilians. Yet it is not the war criminals that Obama is prosecuting, but those who are alleged to have played a role in revealing these crimes.

If he is responsible for the leaks, Manning, only 24 years old, deserves not condemnation but support. His actions are an expression of revulsion, broadly felt in the population, against the Iraq war and American militarism.

While Manning faces a life in prison, just last month Staff Sergeant Frank Wuterich, the leader of a military squad that admitted to the systematic slaughter of 24 Iraqi civilians in Haditha in 2005, reached a plea deal that will ensure that he faces no prison time. All of

those involved in that massacre will now be free.

The brutal treatment of Manning is aimed at forcing him into a plea that will help the government's case against WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange, who is currently in Britain. He is appealing extradition from Britain to Sweden on baseless sex charges, which could eventually lead to his extradition to the US.

According to the logic of the US government, WikiLeaks' revelations of US war crimes aided Al Qaeda and "the enemy," and therefore constitute acts of terrorism. The Obama administration has already declared its right to assassinate anyone, including US citizens, that it accuses of terrorism, or to lock them up indefinitely without charge.

The Obama administration's treatment of Manning exposes it as a government of the military-police apparatus and the corporate and financial elite. In attacking democratic rights, as in every fundamental aspect of government policy, Obama has continued and extended the right-wing trajectory of his predecessor.

The most basic constitutional rights have been effectively abolished in the United States. The right of habeas corpus has been repudiated in the policy of indefinite military detention without charge, formally adopted into law in the National Defense Authorization Act signed by Obama late last year. The government has asserted to itself the right to spy on the population. The revelations of WikiLeaks have also intensified US government attempts to gain more control over the Internet.

After coming to power pledging an "open" government, the Obama administration has prosecuted more whistleblowers like Manning under the Espionage Act than all other administrations combined. It has classified record amounts of data in the effort to keep the world and the American people in the dark about the actions and plans of the government.

At the root of the attack on democratic rights is the

capitalist system—the subordination of the entire economic and political system to the profit interests of a tiny elite. The ruling class in the United States is determined to defend its interests in the face of growing opposition, including the expansion of war and the assault on the working class.

We live in a society in which a tiny layer controls the vast majority of the wealth. As the SEP explains in its program, “The growth of social inequality is incompatible with democracy. The new aristocracy brings with it the aristocratic principle of government, in which the state functions ever more openly as an instrument of class rule.” After bailing out the banks and securing the wealth of the financial elite, the entire political establishment is united in insisting that workers must pay.

In our campaign, the Socialist Equality Party will fight to connect the defense of democratic rights with the growing struggles of workers in the United States and throughout the world against the dictates of the corporate elite and their political representatives. Democratic rights can be defended only through the extension of democracy to economic life. This means the fight for equality and for socialism.



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