

# New support for NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden

9 October 2013

*Three photojournalists—Jack Picone, Shahidul Alam and John Hulme—and an Australian actor, Kevin Hopkins, have added their voices to the WSWs defence campaign for Edward Snowden, opposing Washington’s witch-hunt against the former NSA contractor and expressing their concerns about the escalating attack on democratic rights.*

*Jack Picone is a well-known Australian editorial and documentary photographer based in Bangkok. Over the past two decades he has worked for German Geo, Stern, Der Spiegel, the New Yorker, Time, Newsweek, L’Express, Granta and other publications reporting from numerous countries, including Israel, Angola, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone and the former Yugoslavia. Picone is a co-founder of the Reportage photojournalism festival in Sydney. In another indication of the escalating international attacks on democratic rights, this year’s festival was censored by New South Wales state authorities.*

It requires unfathomable courage and conviction for a single individual—like Snowden—to stand up against the might, power and singularity of the American Government.

On a micro-level it is an almost guaranteed act of preordained professional and personal suicide. On a macro-level it represents the potential to be a catalyst for open and truthful debate amongst a wider global audience about what has become cancerous and sick in the world today.

Snowden is merely the messenger, alerting his fellow man that governments everywhere that impinge on people’s basic human rights in such an invasive way should themselves be scrutinised and held accountable. Snowden’s actions are symptomatic of the problem and not the problem itself.

*Acclaimed Bangladesh photographer Shahidul Alam sent the statement below. The recipient of countless*

*photographic honours, Alam was the first Asian photographer to be given the prestigious Mother Jones Award for Documentary Photography and in 2001 received an honorary fellowship from Royal Photographic Society. He is an advisory board member of the W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund and the National Geographic Society and founder of Majority World, which promotes indigenous photographers, photographic agencies and image collections from under-developed countries. His work has been shown at leading international galleries and museums, including New York’s Museum of Modern Art, the Georges Pompidou Centre, the Tate Modern and numerous others.*

Living in the majority world, we have learnt to expect Western hypocrisy. We are used to the rhetoric on democracy accompanying active support of pliant dictators. We see governments preaching human rights, while actively engaging in torture. Assisting state machineries involved in torture. We see the deification of dissidents in non-Western countries, while Western dissidents are vilified, tortured, sometimes killed. We see extrajudicial killings being approved by presidents, because it is more cost-effective.

With the persecution of Snowden, however, they appear to have given up the pretence. No longer are they concerned with appearing to be moral. A US citizen is being victimised because he believes in the core principles of his nation’s constitution. His crime lies in being patriotic; for putting public interest before state servitude.

Snowden is indeed guilty. He spoke the truth. He protested against injustice. He upheld the rights of the common citizen. It is a guilt I would be proud to share. He should wear it as a badge of honour.

Snowden is doing precisely what the founding fathers of the United States would have wished him to do. The

spying by NSA is an assault on all of us who genuinely believe in democracy. A belief many have died for. From the ashes of this witch hunt, many more Snowdens will surely rise.

*Documentary photographer John Hulme has added his voice to the WSWS campaign. Hulme's work has exposed the plight of the most vulnerable sections of society—from Roma communities in the UK, shanty dwellers in South-East Asia, Burmese immigrants in Thailand and Bangladesh, to indigenous communities in central Australia. His recent photo essay on Burmese migrant workers titled In Search of a Job—any Job has been widely shown including at the Foreign Correspondents Club of Thailand, the Arts Centre Chiang Mai, at Oxford University's Refugee Studies Centre and at New York's Exit Art Gallery.*

Workers, young people, artists and intellectuals owe an inestimable debt to Edward Snowden for exposing the ongoing US government conspiracy against its own citizens and millions of people around the world. His decision to lift the lid on the secret activities of Washington and its international counterparts was—and is—an act of real courage and self-sacrifice.

What contemporary media commentator or journalist is prepared to stand up against the might of US capitalism and defy its lies, slander and intimidation? To ask the question is to answer it. In fact, the corporate media and its hirelings, whether in the US, Britain, France, Germany, Australia or elsewhere, are joint partners in Washington's conspiracy against Snowden and other whistleblowers, such as Assange and Manning.

The period we are now living through will see further global financial convulsions, attacks on the living standards of millions of workers, eruptions of new imperialist wars and dictatorial forms of rule. But it will also see new names arise alongside those of Snowden, Manning and Assange. These young whistleblowers are blazing a trail and emboldening others to speak out.

While Snowden will go down in history as a genuine hero, workers and young people cannot remain silent and see him become a martyr. He must be defended and the witch-hunt against him pushed back as part of a political offensive in defence of democratic rights by ordinary people in every country.

*Australian actor Kevin Hopkins sent the following*

*comment. Hopkins has worked in film, television and theatre for over two decades, including as a member of the Australian Shakespeare Company. He has also directed and taught drama and was until recently the head of acting at GOTAFE Regional Academy of Dramatic Arts.*

The intelligence-gathering operations undertaken by the Obama administration's NSA are absolutely illegal under international law, according to an internal agency audit obtained by the *Washington Post*, and as such are an assault on the human rights of everybody. We have the right to know that this activity threatens our privacy, and our lives, if any of us are deemed a security threat by the US government. The fact that the NSA exceeded its legal authority, and broke agency rules thousands of times since it was granted broader powers in 2008 is a concern to millions of people worldwide, and since these millions of people are implicated, they have a right to know that they are potentially endangered by this illegal spying activity by the Obama administration.

I am not surprised, therefore, by the absolute aggression demonstrated by the US government in its attempt to extradite Edward Snowden back to the US to face charges relating to his disclosure of these illegal activities. Edward Snowden has risked his liberty and his life to bring this information into the public arena, so that the wider population can appreciate the attacks on democracy that are taking place within the National Security Agency and US government. He knows that these methods of intelligence gathering are not in our best interests at all, but an attack on our rights, and should be exposed for what they are. I believe that Edward Snowden has acted on his conscious, and sacrificed his freedom of movement and risked prosecution, that we may be more informed of the insidious acts of the US imperialist regime, and its allied partners, of which Australia is one.



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