

Chelsea Manning found guilty of violating prison rules

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Chelsea Manning, the Army whistleblower who leaked thousands of documents to WikiLeaks documenting war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, was given 21 days of recreational restrictions for allegedly disobeying military prison rules. This included having expired toothpaste and magazines in her cell. Manning was spared the prospect of indefinite solitary confinement, according to her attorney, because of massive public opposition to her imprisonment.

Manning was found guilty of four disciplinary charges, including disorderly conduct and disrespect stemming from an incident on July 2 when authorities accused Manning of “sweeping food onto the floor” and acting “in a contemptuous manner by being disrespectful to the cadre present.”

According to a statement on *ChelseaManning.org*, “The catalyst for this attack on Chelsea seems to have been an incident in the mess hall where she may have pushed, brushed, or accidentally knocked, a small amount of food off of her table. She then asked to speak to her lawyer when confronted by a guard. The absurd charges were tacked on later.”

Manning was also found guilty of medicine misuse—in fact, having expired toothpaste—and possessing prohibited property, which included a copy of *Vanity Fair* magazine with Caitlyn Jenner on the cover and a copy of *Cosmopolitan* magazine featuring an interview with Manning. All of this was legally obtained through the prison’s open mail system, according to Manning’s statement. The military has refused to comment, citing the Privacy Act of 1974.

On her Twitter account Manning wrote, “I am receiving 21 days on restriction—no gym, library or outdoors.” A statement on *Chelsea Manning.org* declared, “These absurd charges against Chelsea, and the outrageous threat of indefinite solitary confinement,

are clearly an attempt to silence Chelsea’s important voice and cut her off from the outside world.”

Manning is serving a 35-year prison term for providing around 700,000 classified and sensitive government documents to WikiLeaks in 2010, and has been imprisoned at Fort Leavenworth army prison in eastern Kansas since 2013. She remains a popular figure, with roughly 55,000 followers on her Twitter account. Her popularity points to broad sentiments within the American population in support of democratic rights and against government secrecy and militarism. That such flimsy charges are being used to threaten her demonstrates the lengths to which the Obama administration will go to silence whistleblowers who expose the crimes of the US government.

On her Twitter account Manning wrote, “Now these convictions will follow me through to any parole/clemency hearing forever. Was expecting to be in minimum custody in February, now years added.” After Manning noted on her Twitter account that she had been denied access to the prison’s legal library only two days before her hearing, support for her swelled. More than 100,000 people signed an online petition urging prison officials to make her disciplinary hearing public.

Manning’s attorney, Chase Strangio of the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a statement that Manning was convicted in a four-hour, closed-door meeting without legal representation. “When I spoke to Chelsea earlier today she wanted to convey the message to supporters that she is so thankful for the thousands of people from around the world who let the government know we are watching and scrutinizing what happens to her behind prison walls. It was no doubt this support that kept her out of solitary confinement. But the fact that Chelsea had to face today’s four-hour Disciplinary

Board without counsel and will now be punished for daring to share her voice sets a concerning precedent for the remaining decades of her incarceration.”

Nancy Hollander, another attorney for Manning, said on Twitter, “Chelsea’s ridiculous convictions today will not silence her. And we will fight even harder in her appeal to overturn all her convictions.”



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