

The guilty silence over the jailing of Chelsea Manning

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It has been ten days since a federal judge imprisoned whistleblower Chelsea Manning for refusing to testify before the secret grand jury in Virginia, which is preparing an indictment against WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange.

After running perfunctory news reports of Manning's jailing, no major US newspapers have published any follow-up reporting on the imprisonment of the United States' most famous whistleblower and political prisoner.

None of the dozens of professional moralists employed by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* who make it their business to publicize "human rights" violations to promote US imperialist interests have written a single column protesting the imprisonment of Manning.

These newspapers regularly report on the alleged imprisonment and mistreatment of journalists, whistleblowers and dissidents at the hands of the United States' geopolitical rivals Russia and China. But when it comes to the jailing of a courageous whistleblower in the United States, they are silent.

The Democratic Party has likewise said nothing. There has been no protest from any significant Democratic politician, including from the party's so-called "progressive" wing. Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar have not spoken in Manning's defense. Phone calls and emails by the WWSW asking for clarification to the offices of Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez were not returned.

The complicity of the Democratic Party in the jailing of Manning is bound up with its pro-imperialist politics. The Democrats have waged their opposition to Trump on the most right-wing basis possible, criticizing the administration for not taking a hard enough position against Russia, denouncing any retreat

from war in the Middle East, and elevating the intelligence agencies into supposed paragons of democracy.

Manning, in contrast, is associated above with the exposure of the crimes of American imperialism. She was arrested in May 2010, just weeks after WikiLeaks published the "Collateral Murder" video showing a US gunship massacring civilians and two *Reuters* journalists in Iraq. She was held by the Obama administration in solitary confinement, under conditions that the UN declared to amount to torture, and hauled before a military court martial. She was sentenced to 35 years imprisonment in 2013. In the final days of his presidency in January 2017, Obama commuted her sentence but refused to grant her a pardon.

Over the past two years, since the election of Trump, efforts to criminalize and persecute WikiLeaks have become ever more central to the political narrative of the Democratic Party.

As Hillary Clinton wrote in her analysis of the 2016 election: "WikiLeaks ... helped accelerate the phenomenon that eventually came to be known as fake news," she asserted, such as the "wild tales" about the "terrible things I must have said behind closed doors and how as president I would be forever in the pocket of the shadowy bankers who had paid my speaking fees."

Far from being "fake" or "wild tales," the leaks published by WikiLeaks exposed both the corruption of the Clinton campaign—including the contents of Clinton's paid speeches to Wall Street—and the deliberate attempts to rig the Democratic primaries to benefit Clinton by the Democratic National Committee hierarchy.

In the name of fighting "fake news," dominant

sections of the political establishment—led by the intelligence agencies and the Democratic Party—have demanded the suppression of left-wing, critical and independent online media. The technology monopolies have been enlisted by the state to police and censor oppositional statements and political viewpoints.

Sanders’ silence on the jailing of Manning—and his silence on the continued persecution of Assange—is of particular significance, as the Senator has ample cause to defend Wikileaks, given that the organization exposed the fact that the Democratic National Committee sought to rig the 2016 primary and disenfranchise his supporters within the Democratic Party.

Perhaps the most revealing silence, however, has come from political organizations proclaiming themselves to be socialist. *Socialist Worker*, the website of the International Socialist Organization (ISO), has not commented on, let alone opposed, the vindictive treatment of a whistleblower who spent close to seven years in prison for leaking documents that exposed war crimes and imperialist intrigues. *Jacobin* magazine, affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), carried only one perfunctory article opposing her persecution, which remains inaccessible from its front page.

Organizations such as the International Socialist Organization are little more than appendages of the Democratic Party. They support imperialist regime-change operations and are hostile to any independent mobilization of the working class. *Indefensible*, a book published by Haymarket, the publication arm of the International Socialist Organization, denounces all of those who criticize US regime-change operations—whether the bombing of Yugoslavia or the efforts to destabilize Syria, as “pseudo-anti-imperialists” in the pockets of Russia. Among the individuals and organizations denounced by the book are both Julian Assange and the *World Socialist Web Site*.

Under both Obama and Trump, *Jacobin* and *Socialist Worker* actively campaigned to support the US regime-change operation in Syria, proclaiming the United States’ Islamist proxy fighters to be emissaries of a “democratic revolution,” and echoed the CIA’s propaganda about the Syrian government’s use of chemical weapons.

The election of Barack Obama, hailed as a “transformative event” by the ISO in 2008, led to eight years of war, domestic spying, and targeted assassination. The imprisonment of Manning was of a piece with the entire imperialist politics of the Democratic Party.

Ultimately, their abandonment of the defense of Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange is an expression of the social interests they speak for: that of the privileged, affluent upper-middle class.

In contrast to the indifference and silent complicity of the entire media and political establishment to the legal travesty that is Chelsea’s arrest, the Socialist Equality Party is waging a campaign to free her. The SEP in Australia has organized demonstrations in Sydney and Melbourne to demand the freedom of Assange and, after her arrest, Manning, which were attended by hundreds of people in person and thousands online.

This past week, the Socialist Equality Party in the US began holding meetings and rallies to demand the freedom of Manning and Assange. We urge all of our readers to join this fight!



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