

US media silent on re-jailing of Chelsea Manning

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Imagine the following scenario:

A dissident soldier in Iran, Venezuela, China or Russia leaks classified information on war crimes committed by his or her government, including video footage of soldiers mowing down innocent civilians, secret cables revealing plots to subvert governments around the world, and reports of suspects being indefinitely held and tortured in notorious prisons.

The soldier is identified and, before even being brought to trial, thrown into a military prison and held under horrific conditions for seven years, including many months of solitary confinement and periods of forced nakedness. On two occasions the soldier, subjected to treatment that amounts to torture according to international human rights organizations, attempts suicide.

Convicted and given a savage sentence of 35 years in prison, the soldier is finally released after the sentence is commuted by the outgoing head of government, who refuses to issue a pardon that would clear the whistle-blower's record.

Less than three years later, a new government throws the ex-soldier back into jail—twice—for refusing to testify to a secret grand jury convened to lay trumped-up charges of espionage, carrying a possible death sentence, against the no less courageous journalist who published the revelations of war crimes the ex-soldier leaked years before. Having been jailed for 62 days, much of the time in solitary confinement, the whistle-blower is released only to be sent back to jail a week later.

Imagine, moreover, that the persecuted whistle-blower is transgender.

The wall-to-wall media outrage and demands for US retaliation, including military action, against the offending state would be deafening. The brazen attack

on press and speech freedom and violation of human rights would be presented as confirmation of the dangerous rogue state character of Iran or Venezuela or China or Russia—whichever one of these countries targeted by the American ruling elite for economic and military assault and regime change was involved.

Front page headlines would be sprawled across all the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*: “Putin (Xi, Maduro, Khamenei) tortures transgender soldier who revealed war crimes!” Every 2020 Democratic presidential candidate would rush to issue a statement of horror and condemnation.

The *New York Times* and its CIA-connected editorial page editor, James Bennet, would commission foreign policy columnist Thomas Friedman or “human rights” imperialist warrior Nicholas Kristof to pen a column about the “moral imperative” for America to intervene in the whistle-blower's defense.

We are, of course, talking about Chelsea Manning, whose only crime was to bring to the light of day the reality of US mass murder in Afghanistan and Iraq, torture at Guantanamo and other US detention camps around the world, and plots against foreign governments. Her partner in this “crime” is Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, who is being held in Belmarsh Prison in London, known as Britain's Guantanamo, fighting extradition to the US to face a show trial and possible execution. And the strongman government that is carrying out this repression is the Trump administration, supported by the corporate media and the Democratic Party.

The response of the so-called “mainstream” media to the imprisonment of Manning for the third time is a conspiracy of silence. Not one of the five Sunday morning news programs even mentioned her name. Neither the *New York Times* nor the *Washington Post*

ran anything over the weekend related to her most recent imprisonment last Thursday. The *Guardian* published one perfunctory 350-word report.

The silence of the US media on Chelsea Manning sheds light on the real agenda behind the Democratic Party-led campaign to censor the internet under the pretext of fighting Russian-inspired “fake news.” In the name of promoting “authoritative” and “responsible” media, i.e., corporate-controlled outlets that are integrated into the military-intelligence apparatus and “responsible” to the capitalist state, whose propaganda and lies they dutifully disseminate, all left-wing and progressive websites and publications that oppose imperialist war and the policies of the government are to be marginalized or silenced.

The attack on Manning and Assange is part of the much broader global assault on basic democratic rights, including freedom of speech, the press and the internet. Since Manning’s revelations, whistleblowers and left-wing journalists have been ruthlessly persecuted—from Edward Snowden to Daniel Hale, who was arrested this month and charged with violating the Espionage Act for revealing secrets about the Pentagon’s drone warfare program.

While Assange and Manning languish in prison for upholding their commitment to democratic rights, not one official responsible for the crimes they, Snowden, Hale and others exposed—including mass murder, government spying and torture—has been prosecuted, let alone jailed.



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