

Chelsea Manning hospitalized after attempting suicide in federal detention

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Lawyers for the courageous whistleblower Chelsea Manning have confirmed that the 32-year-old was rushed to a hospital on Wednesday after an attempted suicide while incarcerated in a federal detention center in Alexandria, Virginia.

Manning has been subjected to solitary confinement and punitive daily fines for one year as of today, for refusing a subpoena to testify in a secret grand jury against Wikileaks founder and publisher Julian Assange.

Assange is currently being held in London's maximum security Belmarsh Prison as he awaits possible extradition to the US, where he faces up to 170 years in prison for charges under the Espionage Act for publishing documents exposing imperialist war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan that had been leaked by Manning in 2010.

Manning previously served seven years of a 35-year sentence in a military brig after she was convicted of violating the Espionage Act and other laws for releasing the documents that would become known as the Iraq War Logs, Afghan War Diary and a video dubbed "Collateral Murder" by WikiLeaks, which showed the murder of Reuters reporters in Baghdad by US helicopter gunships. Her sentence was commuted by President Barack Obama in one of his last acts as president, but Manning was not pardoned, leaving her with a criminal record.

The *Daily Mail* reported that Manning was found unresponsive in her cell by guards with a bed sheet wrapped around her neck. Manning was being housed in a "special housing unit," or SHU. SHUs, also known as "administrative separation," "solitary," "segregated housing," the "hole" or "administrative confinement," are roughly 80-foot cold, concrete, windowless cells in which the imprisoned are forced to remain alone for

22-23 hours a day.

Inmates in this status are typically given one hour to shower, before being permitted to go outside for the remainder of their allotted time. Reading material is heavily restricted, as are visitation hours. That Manning would be put in this status in light of her past suicide attempts, as recently as 2016, is a blatant disregard for her well-being and proof that the US government is indifferent to her safety.

Far from serving a rehabilitative purpose, SHUs are used as a form of punishment and have been described by those unfortunate enough to experience them as a "slow death." Effects from prolonged exposure to solitary confinement, include depression, psychosis, panic attacks, paranoia, diminished impulse control, hypersensitivity to external stimuli, and difficulties with thinking, concentration, memory and suicidal ideations.

Manning has not been charged with a crime, but instead is being imprisoned for refusing to comply with a grand jury subpoena. Under these legal conditions, incarceration is meant to be coercive, not punitive; however, it is clear that the US government is using the indefinite prison term as a means of punishing Manning again for her exposure of their war crimes. If Manning dies in prison, the responsibility will lie with the war criminals which she bravely exposed.

In a 2019 letter to Judge Anthony J. Trenga, Manning defended her principles, making clear that incarceration would never force her to testify and made clear her fundamental objection to the secretive grand jury process.

Manning stated, "I object to this grand jury ... as an effort to frighten journalists and publishers, who serve a crucial public good. I have had these values since I was a child, and I've had years of confinement to reflect on

them. For much of that time, I depended for survival on my values, my decisions, and my conscience. I will not abandon them now.”

In a November 2019 report, Dr. Nils Melzer, the United Nations special rapporteur on torture, argued that Manning’s continued imprisonment fulfilled “all the constitutive elements of torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.”

In a statement posted by Manning’s legal team on *sparrowmedia.net*, Manning’s lawyers confirmed that she is recovering in a local hospital and is still slated to appear on Friday before judge Trenga, who “will rule on a motion to terminate the civil contempt sanctions stemming from her May, 2019 refusal to give testimony before a grand jury investigating the publication of her 2010 disclosures.”

Manning’s lawyers assert that Chelsea remains “unwavering” in her “refusal to participate in a secret grand jury process that she sees as highly susceptible to abuse.”

Manning has honorably and bravely stood up against the US government, which is torturing her in an attempt to force her to renege on her 2013 testimony regarding Assange. Manning has maintained that she released thousands of classified diplomatic, along with the the infamous “Collateral Murder” video and hundreds of thousands of US army war logs on Iraq and Afghanistan to Wikileaks on her own accord and without assistance or persuasion from the former Wikileaks editor.

Melzer has written and spoken powerfully in defense of both Assange and Manning in the face of obstruction and silence from the governments of the US, UK, Sweden, Ecuador and Australia. Melzer has repeatedly warned the public about the gross violations against Assange and Manning’s due process rights, as well as the arbitrary detention both have faced for revealing war crimes committed by the imperialist powers. The collective gang-up by these powerful states against Assange and Manning has had a devastating impact on their mental health, from which neither may ever recover.

Manning has spent a majority of the past decade behind bars for exposing the murderous criminality of the US state. The vindictiveness and cruelty that have been inflicted on her and Assange, beginning with the Democrats under the Obama administration, and

continuing under Trump, testify to the fear and disdain the ruling class has for truth and free speech.

Manning has been abandoned by the Democratic Party, with not a word said about her during the debates or in campaign speeches made by the prospective candidates.

If Manning survives her 18-month detention, which is far from a guarantee, she will have been fined nearly half a million, \$440,000. She has already lost her apartment and as the latest events illustrate, she is under severe psychological stress and torment.

If Manning, Assange and other brave antiwar activists such as Jeremy Hammond—who, like Manning, is being arbitrarily detained in the same Alexandria prison for refusing to testify before a secret grand jury aimed at the WikiLeaks founder—are to be freed, it will be up to the international working class. There is no constituency in the ruling class for the defense of democratic rights, as Jeremy Corbyn’s cowardly silence while leader of the UK Labour Party over Assange’s imprisonment testifies.

This is in stark contrast to the Socialist Equality Party, which has organized rallies and defense committees in support of Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning around the globe. Their lives depend on workers and youth standing up, independent of the parties of capital who have overseen their torture, and joining with the SEP to fight for their freedom.



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