

End 2020 on a Humane Note: The International Community Calls for Human Rights Protections for Assange, Manning and Snowden

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*When governments don't abide by the law, it is imperative that the international community hold those governments to account. Let's be reminded that during World War II, the [United Nations](#) was established as an assembly of nations with the unified imperative, in part, to act as an international watchdog—to ensure that the rights of citizens accord with the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#). Governments that fail to comply to human rights laws must be identified, prosecuted for war crimes, and when necessary boycotted by the international community. Now is the time for the international community to demand that the United States government atone for its unlawful and abhorrent violation of the [U.S. Whistleblower Protection Act](#) by disregarding the rights of **Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden**.*

A whistleblower is described by [Ralph Nader](#) as anyone who exposes information about an organization they serve that is engaged in activities that are corrupt, illegal, fraudulent, or harmful to the public. According to the [U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission](#), the U.S. Whistleblower Protection Act was established to protect informants from persecution and threats to their lives and livelihoods. A noted American whistleblower, [Daniel Ellsberg](#), released the [Pentagon Papers](#) in 1969 that exposed U.S. government lies about activities that cost widespread human losses in Vietnam and Cambodia. According to Ellsberg, it is a necessary duty of employees who have access to information to guard against becoming morons who turn a blind eye and obediently follow orders. A worrisome outcome when authority is unquestionably obeyed is typically called the [Eichman Defense](#). [Adolf Eichmann](#) was the architect of the Nazi extermination camps who infamously stated that he was not responsible for the mass genocides he committed against the Jewish and Roma peoples because he was like a soldier who was [following the orders](#) of his superiors.

Today, the U.S. continues to malign whistleblowers Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning, and Edward Snowden. Instead of championing them for exposing unlawful activities, the U.S. government is persecuting them. We must demand that the U.S. government answer to its rejection of rights for these three who should be protected under the U.S. Whistleblower Protection Act. The U.S. government must stop treating Assange, Manning, and Snowden as criminals by manufacturing charges of espionage, hacking, and theft. In their effort to demonize the whistleblowers, to deny them their first amendment rights, and justify suppression of the vital information released to the public, the U.S. government continues to rely on the false claim that any information marked classified and issued without a security clearance is violating the [Espionage Act of 1917](#). However, any reasonable person considering the information that they had access to, that clearly falls under the definition of the U.S. Whistleblower Act, would agree that they, like Daniel Ellsberg, had a duty to report.

In 2010, Chelsea Manning, a U.S. intelligence analyst stationed in Baghdad provided photographs, videos, and documents showing how the U.S. State Department was engaged in ongoing and appalling breaches of the [1994 UN Convention Against Torture](#). This information was released in the [Iraq War Logs](#), [Cablegate](#), and [Guantanamo Files](#) through [WikiLeaks](#) publisher, Julian Assange. Manning exposed atrocities that were committed in the military ranks and up to the highest leadership levels of the U.S. government. Unthinkable murders, senseless tortures, and the cover up of those crimes that were committed by the U.S. military were revealed. In the [Collateral Murder video](#), that was released to WikiLeaks and that caught the attention of mainstream media, U.S. pilots were shown gunning down journalists and other civilians as though they were playing a video game. Like Manning, the public was shocked by the documents, photographs, and video footage that showed the extent of inhuman brutality executed by taxpayer funded trained soldiers and supported by military psychologists under the orders of U.S. government leaders. It is unfathomable that Manning was not recognized for her valor. Instead she was court-martialed and served seven years in prison. In 2019 she was imprisoned again for non payment of the outstanding and exorbitant legal fines from her court-martial. In March of 2020, Manning was released from prison following a suicide attempt. The public can recognize Manning as a role model who demonstrates the clear distinction between blind obedience and patriotic discipline.



Thanks to WikiLeaks and its publisher Julian Assange, Manning's documents were made public by their inclusion in [The WikiLeaks Public Library of US Diplomacy \(PlusD\)](#) archive. The library contains over 2.3 million documents by sources who, like Manning, made the choice to expose compromising information that needed to be brought to the public eye. The Camp Delta prison in Guantanamo, Cuba exposed barbaric use of torture. The [U.S. Department of Defense Camp Delta Standard Operating Procedure](#) and its [detainee policies](#) consists of over 100 files detailing the procedures sanctioned by high ranking government officials. The leave no marks interrogation techniques were also used by the U.S. prisons based at Camp Bucca and Abu Ghraib, Iraq. One [WikiLeaks source](#), described methods included sleep and sensory deprivation, loud music, and being terrorized by dogs—all in violation of the [U.S. Torture and War Crimes Act](#). In 2004, the [Abu Ghraib Photographs](#) were published by [mainstream media](#). The disgusting photographs, taken by guards as macabre souvenirs, showed the degradation of prisoners with guards posing near them. Images include naked prisoners bound together in contorted positions, naked prisoners blindfolded and grouped in human pyramids, prisoners leashed at the neck and made to crawl on the floor like dogs, and others forced to engage in sexually degrading acts. Haunting accounts were provided by sources that confirmed prisoners endured waterboarding—inhaling lungfuls of water until nearly drowning; strappado—binding hands with a rope and being dropped from a height that resulted in dislocated shoulders or crushing the chest; mock

execution by enclosure in a coffin filled with insects; and being raped with chemical light sticks. Clear violations of the [UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#) were committed.

In 2012, after refusing to expose WikiLeaks sources to U.S. authorities, Assange relocated to Sweden to avoid U.S. persecution on charges of espionage. While in Sweden, rape accusations were levied against him and then dropped after he received asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in London. He lived there for seven years until being forcibly removed to one of Britain's most notorious prisons. Without charge against the U.K. he was denied bail and held under the [US-UK Extradition Treaty](#) of 2003. The U.K. court also dismissed the urging for Assange's release by the [United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention](#). Award winning journalist, John Pilger reports that the two successive [judges overseeing Assange's trial](#) have shown significant bias and disdain toward Assange. The decision regarding Assange's extradition to the U.S. is delayed to January 2021. According to Pilger, Assange suffers declining health while he continues to be held in the London prison. For all these eight years, the Australian government has been complicit with the U.S. and U.K. by offering no protection to their citizen.



In 2013, [Edward Snowden](#), a contract employee of the National Security Agency (NSA) single-handedly exposed the extent of unconstitutional surveillance being committed against the American people by its own government. Today, Snowden lives in exile in Russia where this year he was granted permanent residency. It is ironic that a supposed enemy of the U.S. is protecting his rights. There are Americans who understand the injustice and have recently advocated for Snowden's pardon. In October 2020, U.S. House Representatives Tulsi Gabbard and Matt Gaetz introduced a resolution for Snowden's [charges to be dropped](#). When presenting the [H.Res.1162](#) resolution, Gabbard stated "We need to protect whistleblowers, not the powerful elite," and Gaetz argued, "The Ninth Circuit's recent ruling, holding that the NSA's bulk collection program was unconstitutional, vindicates him." So what is stopping the U.S. government from adhering to its Whistleblower Protection Act?

Arguably, one of the U.S. government's goals is to maintain power and prestige on the world stage. This means the U.S. State Department, and/or deep state, shuns scrutiny. Assange's introductory essay in [The Wikileaks Files: The World According to the US Empire](#) explains the U.S. State Department is unlike other U.S. government bureaucracies. The deep state is one administrative body representing all facets of U.S. power. It is composed of 191 countries and 27 government agencies that include the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the National Security Agency (NSA), and various branches of the U.S. Military. Documents and materials marked classified for U.S. State Department employees are withheld or made inaccessible to the public for decades until their contents are deemed impotent. Additionally, the U.S. State Department spent [\\$2.28 billion in 2017](#) for "public diplomacy" that "explicitly aims to influence journalists and civil society, so that

they serve as conduits for State Department messaging.” The propagandist outlets for the U.S. government emphasize other issues to divert public attention. In a [January 26, 2020 Washington Post op-ed piece](#), Edward Snowden wrote, “The most essential journalism of every era is precisely that which a government attempts to silence. These prosecutions demonstrate that they are ready to stop the presses — if they can.” The shameful complicity of today’s mainstream media, entertainment industry, and social media technocracy that act as state mouthpieces and censors reflects the urgent need for the public to have access to objective dissemination of information as demonstrated by WikiLeaks.

Whistleblowers Assange, Manning and Snowden remind the entire international community—which includes the United States of America (home of patriots Manning and Snowden), the United Kingdom (where Assange is currently being unlawfully imprisoned), and Australia (Assange is a national citizen)—that democratic governments are public institutions and are subject to public international laws. When they violate their laws it is essential for whistleblowers to come forward. When their governments won’t protect them, the international community must step up. The international community must laud Assange, Manning, and Snowden for exposing unlawful government conduct and prevent a future history that will look back on this time and question what we are willing to tolerate.

Last month, we saw the Nobel Peace Prize committee miss an important opportunity to make their political decision count where values of world peace are concerned. Among the nominations were calls by [seventeen members of German parliament](#) to recognize Assange, Manning, and Snowden. Had the committee split their decision, sharing the prize between the UN World Food Program and the work of whistleblowers Assange, Manning, and Snowden, the values of peace and freedom would have been duly expressed. Furthermore, the Nobel Peace Prize committee would have made a strong statement to the U.S. and U.K. and Australia, in particular, that the world does not condone the continuing and appalling mistreatment of Assange, Manning and Snowden.

As we near the end of 2020, let’s reflect that it has been over ten years since Manning courageously released those horrific *Iraq War Logs*. It has been nearly nine years since Assange was treated as a free citizen. It has been eight years since Snowden was forced to live in exile. The international community must send the clear message that the U.S. government’s blatant disregard of the law is not acceptable. We demand that the U.S. adhere to its Whistleblower Protection Act and with the U.K. and Australian governments secure the immediate and safe release of Assange. We demand that the U.S. administer immediate and appropriate pardons for Assange, Manning and Snowden, and provide immediate and retroactive financial recompense for all three whistleblowers’ legal costs, fines, and lost wages. Further, all reparations by the U.S. for Assange, Manning, and Snowden along with investigations of U.S. State Department and its allies’ wrongdoings must be documented on the [United Nations](#) and [WikiLeaks](#) websites—and not manipulated nor suppressed by the propagandist media outlets. The international community has the power and duty to demand the timely and humane protection of Assange, Manning and Snowden, and to apply pressure as we stand with the UN to oversee immediate and accurate accountability measures.

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