

## Six Questions Journalists Should Ask Barack Obama When He Visits (Enter Your Country Name Here)

By [Christian Christensen](#)

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Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#)

*At what point will President Obama be forced to answer tough questions that most mainstream US journalists seem unable or unwilling to ask? (File)*

1. Mr. President, one of your election promises in 2008 was to close Guantanamo. It is still open, housing inmates who have not been charged with a crime and denied the basic right of habeas corpus. A large number of those inmates have been on a lengthy hunger strike in protest at their inhumane treatment. Can you explain to the people of (ENTER YOUR COUNTRY) how this prison, which you have failed to close, stands in relation to US claims to be a country which respects human rights and the rule of law?

2. Mr. President, you will accept, I hope, that a fundamental element of a functioning democracy is the presence of vibrant, critical journalism. That journalism is often fueled by whistle-blowers who release information they feel shows illegal or unethical behavior. Given the aggressive prosecution of Bradley Manning, Barrett Brown and Edward Snowden in the US, as well as the Grand Jury investigation into WikiLeaks and Julian Assange, can you explain to the people of (ENTER YOUR COUNTRY) why the US is going to such lengths to stifle the work of journalists, as well as prosecute individuals who engage in an act that is fundamental to keeping an eye on those in power, namely whistle-blowing?

3. Mr. President, the US is ranked 5th globally in the number of executions behind only China, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, and ahead of North Korea, Yemen, Somalia and Sudan. The US is also the only country amongst nations with advanced economies to still have the death penalty. How can the US lecture other nations on human rights when it engages in an act so many countries consider barbaric?

4. Mr. President, citizens of (ENTER COUNTRY NAME) might be confused as to how the US can justify the killing of its own citizens via the use of drones without judicial oversight, as well as the well-documented killing of scores of innocent civilians globally via the use of the same technology. Could you explain to the people of (ENTER YOUR COUNTRY) how drones, like Guantanamo and the death penalty, square with a US commitment to the right of fair trials, basic human rights and the rule of law?

5. Mr. President, do you feel it is appropriate for a person to be held for 9 hours, without access to a lawyer, under counter-terrorism laws simply because he is the partner of a journalist who broke the NSA story? Was the US involved in any way with his detention? Should journalists throughout the world who report on US national security now be worried when they travel, in case they are questioned at the request of the US government at random international borders?

6. Mr. President, one of the hallmarks of both the former Soviet Union and current authoritarian regimes is the use of widespread surveillance under the guise of protecting “national security.” Can you explain how secret, widespread surveillance of the US population, done in cooperation with private corporations, can be justified in a nation that proclaims to be “the freest in the world”? Should Americans not be able to send an email without fear of it being read by the government?

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