

54 Members of the European Parliament Express Serious Concerns over the Treatment of Bradley Manning

by James Ball via judd - The Guardian UK Tuesday, Nov 29 2011, 7:25am

international / human rights / other press

UN special rapporteur on Torture Denied access to Torture victim, Manning

More than 50 members of the European parliament have signed an open letter to the US government [raising concerns](#) about the treatment of Bradley Manning, the US soldier in military detention for allegedly leaking classified US documents to the whistleblowing site WikiLeaks.



The call on the US government comes before a pre-trial hearing - Manning's first appearance in court - which begins on 16 December.

The MEPs said internal investigations into Manning's treatment in custody, which included solitary confinement for up to 23 hours a day, inspections by officers every five minutes from 5am onwards and removal of his clothes, had been marred by "clear conflicts of interest".

They call for US authorities to grant Juan Méndez, the UN special rapporteur on torture, access to Manning.

Mendez has made repeated requests for access to the military base where Manning is held, all of which have been refused by US authorities.

Manning was arrested in May 2010 after allegedly confessing to passing thousands of documents to WikiLeaks to computer hacker Adrian Lamo, who informed the authorities. He was charged with 12 offences under the uniform code in July 2010. An additional 22 charges were added in March 2011, following the publication of the Afghan and Iraq war logs, Guantánamo files and US embassy cables.

One charge, "aiding the enemy", carries the death penalty in the US, but army prosecutors have indicated they will not seek such a punishment in Manning's case.

The open letter from European parliamentarians, which follows another signed by several hundred US legal scholars, questioned the charges against Manning and warned that his pre-trial treatment may harm the UN's work elsewhere, "particularly its mandate to investigate allegations of torture and human rights abuses".

"In order to uphold the rights guaranteed to Bradley Manning under international human rights law and the US constitution, it is imperative that the United Nations special rapporteur be allowed to properly investigate evidence of rights abuses. PFC Manning has a right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment. People accused of crimes must not be subjected to any form of punishment before being brought to trial," they wrote.

"We certainly do not understand why an alleged whistleblower is being threatened with the death penalty, or the possibility of life in prison. We also question whether Bradley Manning's right to due process has been upheld, as he has now spent over 17 months in pre-trial confinement."

Five MEPs from the UK signed the open letter in support of Manning, who holds dual US and UK citizenships. They were Labour MEPs Richard Howitt and Derek Vaughan, Green MEPs Jean Lambert and Keith Taylor, and Plaid Cymru MEP Jill Evans.

Manning will attend an Article 32 hearing, the US military equivalent of a pre-trial hearing, on 16 December. This is expected to last five days. Manning's lawyer, David Coombs, has indicated he wishes to call 50 witnesses at the hearing, but military authorities are considered unlikely to grant such a request.

The Article 32 hearing then makes a recommendation to a general as to whether to proceed to a full trial.

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[It is high time the entire civilised, moral world expressed its disdain and opposition to the world's leading civilian killing, (therefore terrorist) Torture nation.

America today regards itself above all laws and civilised conventions -- it arrogantly and insanely pursues global domination at any cost. The term the US military use to describe innocent civilians/children murdered by illegal Drone attacks is, "[Bugsplat](#)" -- a VILE PEOPLE and a CRIMINAL NATION!]

Letter To:

US President Barack Obama

Members of the US Senate

Members of the US House of Representatives

US secretary of defence Leon Panetta

US secretary of the army John McHugh

US army chief of staff Raymond T Odierno

As members of the European parliament, who were elected to represent our constituents throughout Europe, we are writing to express our concerns about alleged human rights violations against Bradley Manning, a young soldier who has been accused of releasing classified information pertaining to possible US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. We are concerned that the US army

has charged Bradley Manning with "aiding the enemy," a capital offence that is punishable by death. We have questions about why Mr Manning has been imprisoned for 17 months without yet having had his day in court. We are troubled by reports that Mr Manning has been subjected to prolonged solitary confinement and other abusive treatment tantamount to torture. And we are disappointed that the US government has denied the request of the United Nations special rapporteur on torture to meet privately with Mr Manning in order to conduct an investigation of his treatment by US military authorities.

We call upon the United States government to allow Juan Méndez, the United Nations special rapporteur on torture, to conduct a private meeting with Bradley Manning, the accused WikiLeaks whistle-blower. Mr Méndez has made repeated requests to American officials to meet privately with Mr Manning in response to evidence that he was subjected to abusive confinement conditions while he was detained at a facility in Quantico, Virginia. Mr Manning was held in solitary confinement for 23 hours per day during the eight months he was incarcerated at that location. It appears that he was at times forced to sleep and stand at attention without any clothing. His legal counsel has documented additional incidents which indicate the possibility of other rights violations.

Hundreds of US legal scholars have signed an open letter to the Obama administration, arguing that the conditions of confinement endured by Mr Manning at Quantico may have amounted to torture. Following worldwide calls for an end to the abusive treatment, Manning was moved to a facility in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, where his conditions are said to have improved. The US military conducted an internal investigation into the allegations of mistreatment at Quantico. The preliminary results of this investigation found that Mr Manning was improperly placed on "prevention of injury" status, against the recommendations of qualified medical personnel. However, these findings were ultimately overturned by a military prison official who was implicated by the report. Therefore, the US military's internal investigation has been compromised by clear conflicts of interest. This so-called "prevention of injury" status was the justification for a number of extraordinary measures, such as denying Mr Manning comfortable bedding and not allowing him to exercise.

By preventing UN officials from carrying out their duties, the United States government risks undermining support for the work of the United Nations elsewhere, particularly its mandate to investigate allegations of torture and human rights abuses. In order to uphold the rights guaranteed to Bradley Manning under international human rights law and the US constitution, it is imperative that the United Nations special rapporteur be allowed to properly investigate evidence of rights abuses. PFC Manning has a right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment. People accused of crimes must not be subjected to any form of punishment before being brought to trial.

Finally, we in the European Union are totally opposed to the death penalty. And we certainly do not understand why an alleged whistleblower is being threatened with the death penalty, or the possibility of life in prison. We also question whether Bradley Manning's right to due process has been upheld, as he has now spent over 17 months in pre-trial confinement.

Furthermore, Bradley Manning should not be forced to waive his right against self-incrimination in order to speak with anyone who seeks to investigate evidence of abuse in their official capacity.

Consistent with these internationally recognised standards, as well as the rules governing his mandate, United Nations special rapporteur on torture Juan Méndez must be allowed to conduct an unmonitored meeting with Bradley Manning, without any further delay.

Yours sincerely,

1. Marisa Matias
2. Christian Engström
3. Ana Gomes
4. Marietje Schaake
5. Christopher Fjellner
6. Jan Albrecht
7. Margrete Auken
8. Alexander Alvaro
9. Sandrine Bélier
10. Lothar Bisky
11. Pascal Canfin
12. Françoise Castex
13. Nessa Childers
14. Nikolaos Chountis
15. Daniel Cohn-Bendit
16. Tarja Cronberg
17. Véronique De Keyser
18. Bas Eickhout
19. Cornelia Ernst
20. Jill Evans
21. Göran Färm
22. Ilda Figueiredo
23. Sven Giegold
24. Mikael Gustafsson
25. Thomas Händel
26. Rebecca Harms

27. Anna Hedh
28. Jacky Henin
29. Elie Hoarau
30. Richard Howitt
31. Yannick Jadot
32. Ska Keller
33. Jürgen Klute
34. Jean Lambert
35. Philippe Lambert
36. Kartika Liotard
37. Sabine Lösing
38. Olle Ludrigsson
39. Ulrike Lunacek
40. Willy Meyer
41. Paul Murphy
42. Miguel Portas
43. Heide Rühle
44. Judith Sargentini
45. Carl Schlyter
46. Helmut Scholz
47. Marc Tarabella
48. Rui Tavares
49. Keith Taylor
50. Emilie Turunen
51. Marita Ulvskog
52. Derek Vaughan

53. Asa Westlund

54. Gabriele Zimmer

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/29/bradley-manning-concerns-mep-letter>

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-2864.html>