

Edward Snowden's Asylum Quest: Press Conference in Moscow Airport

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Snowden reflects the best of heroic activism. He acted responsibly. He did the right thing. He committed no crimes. He knew the risks and took them.

Few would do as much. Legions more are needed. Maybe he'll inspire others to come forward. Today they're more than ever needed.

He sacrificed financial security, personal freedom and well-being. He did so to expose serious US high crimes. Potentially everyone's harmed everywhere. Millions worldwide support him. Everyone should.

On Friday, he met with representatives from 13 human rights organizations. He did so in Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport transit area. It was closed to the press.

The meeting lasted 45 minutes. It began with [Snowden saying](#):

"Hello. My name is Ed Snowden," he said. "A little over one month ago, I had family, a home in paradise, and I lived in great comfort."

"I also had the capability without any warrant to search for, seize, and read your communications."

"Anyone's communications at any time. That is the power to change people's fates."

Doing so is illegal, he said. Core constitutional and international law provisions prohibit it. They don't matter.

"(M)y government argues that secret court rulings, which the world is not permitted to see, somehow legitimize an illegal affair."

"These rulings simply corrupt the most basic notion of justice – that it must be seen to be done. The immoral cannot be made moral through the use of secret law."

He did "what (he) believed right." He "began a campaign to correct this wrongdoing."

He doesn't seek enrichment. He didn't sell US secrets to foreign governments. He exposed serious NSA wrongdoing. He committed no crime doing so. He's a whistleblower in the best tradition of doing the right thing. He deserves high praise, not persecution.

His decision to expose lawless spying was “costly.” He acted because it’s “the right thing to do.” He has “no regrets.”

Washington’s making an example of him. Doing so warns others not to speak out as he did. He’s “stateless and hounded” for acting responsibly.

US officials threatened countries supporting him. Rogue states operate this way. America’s by far the worst.

Snowden’s a political refugee. According to international and constitutional law, he warrants asylum status. Full-court US pressure’s trying to deny him.

He prefers Latin America. He thanked “countries around the world” offer(ing) support and asylum.”

“These nations, including Russia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador have my gratitude and respect for being the first to stand against human rights violations carried out by the powerful rather than the powerless.”

“By refusing to compromise their principles in the face of intimidation, they have earned the respect of the world. It is my intention to travel to each of these countries to extend my personal thanks to their people and leaders.”

“I announce today my formal acceptance of all offers of support or asylum I have been extended and all others that may be offered in the future.”

“With, for example, the grant of asylum provided by Venezuela’s President Maduro, my asylee status is now formal, and no state has a basis by which to limit or interfere with my right to enjoy that asylum.”

“This willingness by powerful states to act extra-legally represents a threat to all of us, and must not be allowed to succeed.”

“Accordingly, I ask for your assistance in requesting guarantees of safe passage from the relevant nations in securing my travel to Latin America, as well as requesting asylum in Russia until such time as these states accede to law and my legal travel is permitted.”

“I will be submitting my request to Russia today, and hope it will be accepted favorably.”

On Friday, Obama called Vladimir Putin. A brief “[readout](#)” said the two leaders spoke.

They “noted the importance of US-Russian bilateral relations and discussed a range of security and bilateral issues, including the status of Mr. Edward Snowden and cooperation on counter-terrorism in the lead-up to the Sochi Winter Olympics.”

White House press secretary [Jay Carney](#) said:

“Our position on Mr. Snowden and the felony charges against him, and our belief that he ought to be returned to the United States to face those felony charges is as it was.”

“And we have communicated it to a variety of countries, including Russia.”

“So it’s no different than it was. And I would simply say that providing a propaganda platform for Mr. Snowden runs counter to the Russian government’s previous declarations of Russia’s neutrality and that they have no control over his presence in the airport.”

“It’s also incompatible with Russian assurances that they do not want Mr. Snowden to further damage US interests.”

He’s “sure President Putin is aware of (Washington’s) views...”

He lied saying Snowden “will be afforded full due process” if returned. He’s already declared guilty by accusation. He’ll be treated mercilessly like Bradley Manning. Human rights advocates condemned what amounts to torture.

For his part, Putin earlier said he’ll not be extradited. Russia has no treaty obligation to do so.

At her [Friday press briefing](#), State Department spokesman Jennifer Psaki expressed “disappoint(ment) that Russian officials and agencies facilitated” Snowden’s airport meeting.

AP’s Matthew Lee challenged her asking:

“You don’t think he should have a forum? Has he forfeited his right to freedom of speech as well?”

“(I) didn’t didn’t realize people who were wanted on charges forfeited their right to speech – to free speech.”

“I also didn’t realize that people who were not whistleblowers or not human rights activists, as you say he is not, that they forfeited their rights to speak, so I don’t understand why you’re disappointed with the Russians.”

Washington heavily pressured human rights organizations not to attend Snowden’s briefing.

America’s Moscow ambassador Michael McFaul and/or other embassy officials did so. Psaki equivocated in response to Lee’s questions.

She lied saying McFaul wasn’t involved. She provided little information. She offered no “specifics.”

In response to whether Washington “tr(ied) to dissuade (human rights) groups from” attending, she said:

“Not that I’m aware of, Matt.”

Lee asked if groups attending faced “consequences” for doing so. In response, she said:

“I don’t have any readouts of these calls.”

She disingenuously stressed America's support for free speech.

"Except when it come to this," said Lee.

He very much got the best of the exchange. Perhaps Psaki won't call on him again. Helen Thomas suffered the same fate earlier.

Washington doesn't countenance speaking truth to power. It wants its message alone heard. It wants reporters regurgitating it without challenge.

Lee did what few others dare. He pressed Psaki responsibly. He did so with numerous questions. He refused to accept evasive answers. He acted responsibly for doing so. It won't surprise if he's punished.

In May, AP revealed weeks of unjustifiable Justice Department spying. Telephone records of reporters and editors were secretly obtained.

AP president/CEO Gary Pruitt called what happened a "massive and unprecedented intrusion." He demanded all records gotten be returned.

He wanted assurance all copies were destroyed. "There can be no possible justification for such an over-broad collection of the telephone communications of The Associated Press and its reporters," he said.

DOJ officials left unexplained why phone records were sought. Journalists and others are vulnerable to what AP experienced. America's surveillance society is relentless. It's all-embracing.

On July 13, [Russia Today](#) headlined "Asylum for Snowden won't stop Greenwald from publishing more leaks."

He has plenty more information to reveal. "There are many more domestic stories coming, and big ones, and soon," said Greenwald.

"Given everything (he) know(s he'll) be very shocked if" Snowden asks him to stop.

He'll "deal with that hypothetical only in the extremely unlikely event that it ever happened, but (he) can't foresee anything that would or could stop (him) from further reporting on the NSA documents" he has.

Hopefully we'll know more soon. High crimes need exposure. Widespread public knowledge is essential. Responsible parties need to be held accountable.

Snowden deserves universal support. Washington wants him silenced. It wants him hunted down ruthlessly. Hegemons operate this way.

Snowden's no criminal. He a law and order champion. He's a heroic whistleblower. Daniel Ellsberg said "he's done an enormous service. It can't be overestimated."

"It gives us a chance, I think, from drawing back from the total surveillance state that we could say we're in process of becoming. I'm afraid we have become. That's what he's revealed."

Ellsberg said had he known what Snowden revealed, he have done the same thing. He'd have committed responsible civil disobedience. It's a noble US tradition.

Snowden represents the best of modern-day whistleblowers. He took great risks. He's gravely endangered.

Escaping America's long arm isn't easy. As long as he's free, he'll be pursued relentlessly.

Hopefully he'll get his just reward. Safe haven asylum gives him a chance.

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