

US Government Fears Chelsea Manning Disclosures May Lead to Indictments for War Crimes

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Global Research, August 13, 2016

[Counter Punch](#) 12 August 2016

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#),
[Intelligence](#), [Law and Justice](#)

28-year-old whistleblower, Private Chelsea Manning, currently serving a 35 year sentence at Kansas' Fort Leavenworth, tried to kill herself on July 5. As a result of her suicide attempt, she now faces further punishment including possible indefinite solitary confinement.

Manning, who was first taken into custody in 2010 had already been subjected to solitary confinement for 9 months, even before she was convicted. Manning's supporters believe that the long stretches in solitary confinement since her conviction and lack of essential medical care have contributed to her mental deterioration.

Manning's attorney Chase Strangio of the ACLU and legendary whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg, known best for his role in exposing the Pentagon Papers which revealed failing U.S strategy in the Vietnam War, both explained the significance of the U.S government's further punishment of Chelsea Manning during a press conference call earlier today.



According to Strangio, Manning's "loss of access to phone calls, the prison library, and not getting medical treatment for gender dysphoria," while "cutting Chelsea off from her outside support" is how the government is "destabilizing her mental health." She also added that if there are other such suicide attempts in solitary confinement in Leavenworth, "the government does not make such information public."

When asked whether this was grounds to sue for "mental anguish," Strangio replied that the ACLU had already sued Department of Defense and Department of Army officials "for their failure to provide necessary medical treatment for her gender dysphoria" but "would consider further legal action" if warranted.

Strangio also explained that the "arbitrary administrative charges" which Manning faces, "are designed to make anything a violation. Even possessing a tube of expired toothpaste, which a prisoner has no control over, can be used against them."

Daniel Ellsberg, who himself was threatened with 115 years in prison for leaking to the press, top secret information about U.S. Decision-making in the Vietnam war, described Manning "a personal hero". Ellsberg's leak led to the convictions of several White House aides and figured in the impeachment proceedings against President Nixon, after which Ellsberg had his own charges dropped in 1973. Ellsberg stated in the press conference that he believes the primary motive for such a lengthy sentence for Manning was because U.S government officials feared possible indictments as a result of Manning's leaks.

Ellsberg explained that Manning's disclosures revealed such incriminating information as "turning over Iraqi prisoners for torture, widespread use of assassination teams, and blatant war crimes" which Ellsberg said made U.S. officials "liable for criminal prosecution in International Criminal Court (ICC)." While admitting that "the chances of the U.S. accepting the ICC's jurisdiction and actually prosecuting the former U.S. president or other U.S. officials was virtually zero," Ellsberg added that "further investigation would reveal even more such incriminating information" and viewed Manning's lengthy prison sentence as "retaliation for providing evidence that could be used against U.S. officials."

Ellsberg stated that Manning's leaked info was "actually less classified" than the Pentagon Papers, and added that the government "had never proven in court that any harm resulted from Manning's leaks. He further criticized the government for "misusing the Espionage Act which was meant for spies and not for whistleblowers acting in the public interest."

Ellsberg firmly stated that he considered Manning "a political prisoner" and said that both Manning and Edward Snowden deserved political asylum as both of them were acting to inform the American public and not out of malice. Ellsberg noted that Snowden fled the U.S. after seeing how Manning was treated and that most countries did not offer Snowden asylum for fear of antagonizing the U.S., with the exception of Russia, where Snowden currently resides.

Ellsberg was also critical of the military court that convicted Manning "without ever giving her a chance to bring up her reasons for her actions" which Ellsberg said was "unconstitutional."

As a whistleblower himself, Ellsberg felt that leaking the Pentagon Papers was "the right choice" and that he would "like to see more Chelsea Mannings." Ellsberg also described Manning as "extraordinarily patriotic and humane" and called her suicide attempt "understandable." Ellsberg further criticized the U.S. government's treatment of Manning. "These new charges and mistreatment is meant to break her down. It is sadistic and outrageous."

This morning, Manning's supporters delivered a petition with 115,000 signatures to the Secretary of the Army demanding the Army drop charges stemming from Manning's [July 5 suicide attempt](#). Evan Greer, campaign director of *Fight for the Future*, said, "The U.S. government's treatment of her will be remembered as one of the most shameful abuses of power in our nation's history. Everyone who cares about human rights should be speaking out against this cruelty and injustice right now."

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