

# AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT OBAMA FROM POLITICIANS IN THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

Dear President Obama,

As politicians in the Welsh Assembly, we write to you about Bradley Manning, the young American soldier recently sentenced to 35 years in prison. This is of particular concern to us as he is also British - specifically Welsh - by descent; he lived here in Wales as a teenager, and his mother and maternal family still do.

Together with [Amnesty International](#) and [others](#), we are appealing to you in support of Pvt. Manning's request for clemency.

As politicians we understand that governments and the military must have secrets. But we also know that whistleblowing is a key contribution to maintaining a healthy democracy. You, yourself, have spoken of the debt we all owe to whistleblowers, and when, in 2009, your administration [stated](#) that *'such actions of courage and patriotism which can sometimes save lives...should be encouraged rather than stifled'*, you demonstrated that, in principle at least, you understand why Pvt. Manning would [write](#): *'When I chose to disclose classified information, I did so out of a love for my country and a sense of duty to others'*.

Whatever one's view of the appropriateness of the (then) 22-year-old's actions, it seems that Pvt. Manning was acting in good faith, prompted by conscience, and, as Amnesty International [has said](#), *'trying to do the right thing - to reveal credible evidence of unlawful behaviour by the government'*.

Pvt. Manning [said](#) that he was seeing *'awful things, terrible things'* in his work as an intelligence analyst during the Iraq War and that he felt compelled to release the information for the good of humanity. He [wrote](#) at the time: *'I feel it's important that it gets out....that it might actually change something. If it's out in the open it should be a public good.'*

And Amnesty International has [agreed](#) that *'documents Manning revealed to WikiLeaks included videos and dossiers that pointed to potential human rights violations - including breaches of international humanitarian law - by US troops abroad and the CIA closer to home'*.

Also, the evidence presented at Court Martial did not in fact show that harm had come to the United States or allied personnel, and Pvt. Manning was exonerated of the unsupported charge of 'aiding the enemy', which Amnesty International [described](#) as *'ludicrous'*, and *'a travesty of justice'* that *'makes a mockery of the military court system'*.

Because of all the above; remembering the [controversy](#) caused by Pvt. Manning's [unlawful](#) pretrial punishment and the [well publicised](#) conditions of that confinement (which the UN rapporteur on torture [concluded](#) was at least *'cruel, inhuman and degrading'*, and which even a key State Dept spokesperson [described as](#) *'ridiculous, counter-productive and stupid'*); taking into account the three years Pvt. Manning had to wait for trial, together with his freely offered [guilty plea](#) and the [statement](#) taking responsibility for his actions; considering his [apology](#), which demonstrated a more mature understanding of those actions, and also his undoubted good intentions at the time - we are asking you to [pardon](#) this young whistleblower or commute his sentence to time served (already more than three years), as requested by him on September 3rd.

Because of his connection with our country, Bradley Manning's case has been a cause for concern here in Wales. Many people see him as a young person of principle and are troubled when they hear of his circumstances. Bradley's mother recently gave [an interview](#) in which she said she thought that she would never see her son again as she was too ill to travel and she feared he would spend decades in prison. We believe Pvt. Manning and his family have suffered enough and agree with [his lawyer](#) that the sentence is *'disproportionate to both the offense and the offender'*.

To remedy this, we urge you to grant Pvt. Manning's request for a Presidential Pardon or commute his sentence.

DATED: Oct 2013

SIGNED:

Key Reference Docs:

Pardon Pvt. Manning [overview](#); Supporting LETTERS/STATEMENTS from [David Coombs](#) lawyer, [Amnesty International](#), [Pvt. Manning](#); Other Amnesty International STATEMENTS [here](#) and [here](#) and [here](#)