



# RIGHT2KNOW

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5 October 2016  
U.S. Embassy Pretoria  
877 Pretorius St  
Arcadia  
Pretoria

5 October 2016

To Ambassador Patrick Gaspard,

**RE: Call to President Obama to pardon Pvt Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden**

We write to you as a South African civil society organisation committed to freedom of expression and the rights of whistleblowers, to call on President Obama to pardon Private Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden. These individuals are whistleblowers who acted on the conviction that the global public has a right to know, and whose actions were overwhelmingly in the public interest.

Chelsea Manning's courageous disclosures informed the world of tremendous excesses and human rights abuses committed by US troops and allies in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the treatment of detainees at Guantánamo Bay. For this she faced a manifestly unfair trial, a draconian 35-year prison sentence, and has experienced inhumane detention conditions both before and after her conviction that have endangered her very life.

Edward Snowden's disclosures revealed a global mass surveillance system, administered by the United States and its allies, that affects not only US citizens but millions of people across the world. These programmes have violated the rights of countless African communication users. Snowden's revelations also included evidence of unjustifiable targeted surveillance of international organisations, human rights organisations and representatives of sovereign governments -- including, among others, the South African delegation to the G20 summits. For this he faces decades in prison under the draconian Espionage Act, and has been exiled to a foreign country.

Both Snowden and Manning made disclosures that clearly advanced our right to know, and the collective human quest for justice.

The draconian treatment of Snowden and Manning is unjustifiable in terms of your government's responsibility to protect whistleblowers' right to free speech -- and has a corrosive effect on freedom of expression across the world. By persecuting whistleblowers who have acted in the public interest, the US sends a message that other governments take notice of. Amid a global clampdown on free expression and human rights, it is vital that President Obama uses his legal authority to signal a departure from a troubling trend of his administration, of unprecedented persecution of whistleblowers.

We therefore call on President Obama to issue presidential pardons to Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning.

Sincerely,

The Right2Know Campaign