

National Lawyers Guild

"An organization of lawyers, law students, legal workers, and jailhouse lawyers... in the service of the people, to the end that human rights shall be regarded as more sacred than property interests." Preamble to the NLG Constitution

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

December 16, 2016

Dear President Obama:

The National Lawyers Guild Military Law Task Force joins more than 102,000 people who have called on you to pardon Chelsea Manning or, at the very least, commute the remainder of her sentence. You are well aware of the fact that her actions revealed serious incidents and addressed important issues that, despite your administration's promises of transparency, were kept from the American public. Whatever one may think of her choice of means, there is no doubt that her actions were prompted by a deep moral sense that is all too often lacking in US policy and among US leaders.

As you should know, Ms. Manning's incarceration has been far more difficult than that of most prisoners because of her issues around her gender identity. Your administration has recently expressed its support for non-gender conforming members of our society. At least, Attorney General Lynch assured them that the Department of Justice has their backs.

No good can be served by extending Ms. Manning's confinement. There is no possibility that she will repeat her offense, her punishment has already been severe and sufficient to serve whatever preventive purpose could have been accomplished by her prosecution. All that is left is retribution.

Our criminal system places excessive emphasis on punishment and has done so in this case. Justice requires that punishment be tempered with mercy in appropriate circumstances. This is one such circumstance and you would be remiss not to exercise it.

The National Lawyers Guild is the country's oldest and largest human rights bar organization and was the first integrated national bar association. It has a proud history of defending and advancing human rights in the US and around the world. Its Military Law Task Force has defended the rights of our service members for decades and we stand in full support of PVT Manning.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Gilbert,
Executive Director
Military Law Task Force

Law for the People since 1937