

AI Index: PRE 01/357/2013
18 July 2013

Bradley Manning: US ‘aiding the enemy’ charge a travesty of justice

The decision by the US military judge not to drop the charge accusing Private Bradley Manning of “aiding the enemy” is a travesty of justice, Amnesty International said today. If he is found guilty of the charge, he faces a possible life sentence in military custody with no chance of parole.

“The charge of ‘aiding the enemy’ is ludicrous. What’s surprising is that the prosecutors in this case, who have a duty to act in the interest of justice, have pushed a theory that making information available on the internet – whether through Wikileaks, in a personal blog posting, or on the website of The New York Times – can amount to ‘aiding the enemy’,” said Widney Brown, Senior Director of International Law and Policy at Amnesty International.

To prove the charge that Manning has “aided the enemy,” the US government has to establish that he gave potentially damaging intelligence information to an enemy, and that he did so knowingly, with “general evil intent”.

The prosecution’s own witnesses repeatedly told the court that they found no evidence that Manning was sympathetic towards al-Qaeda or other terrorist groups, that he had never expressed disloyalty to his country, that they had no evidence that he had ties to any government other than his own.

“It’s abundantly clear that the charge of ‘aiding the enemy’ has no basis and the charge should be withdrawn,” said Widney Brown. “This makes a mockery of the US military court system.