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## **USA: Bradley Manning acquitted of ‘aiding the enemy’**

Despite the acquittal of Private Bradley Manning of the most serious “aiding the enemy” charge against him, today's verdict reveals the US government's misplaced priorities on national security by finding him guilty today of a range of other charges, Amnesty International said.

“The government’s pursuit of the ‘aiding the enemy’ charge was a serious overreach of the law, not least because there was no credible evidence of Manning’s intent to harm the USA by releasing classified information to Wikileaks,” said Widney Brown, Senior Director of International Law and Policy at Amnesty International.

“The government’s priorities are upside down. The US government has refused to investigate credible allegations of torture and other crimes under international law despite overwhelming evidence.

“Yet they decided to prosecute Manning who it seems was trying to do the right thing – reveal credible evidence of unlawful behaviour by the government. You investigate and prosecute those who destroy the credibility of the government by engaging in acts such as torture which are prohibited under the US Constitution and in international law.”

The hundreds of thousands of documents Manning released 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.

The court found Manning guilty of a range of additional charges, including 10 lesser charges relating to misuse of classified information to which he had already pleaded guilty.

Any sentence imposed for the other charges must take into account information relating to Manning’s reasonable belief that he was exposing serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.

It undermines accountability when the US government is so selective about who it chooses to investigate and prosecute, Amnesty International said. This is particularly true when they seem intent on punishing those who reveal unlawful government behaviour and protecting those who actually engaged in or ordered such behaviour.

“Since the attacks of September 11, we have seen the US government use the issue of national security to defend a whole range of actions that are unlawful under international and domestic law,” said Brown.

“It's hard not to draw the conclusion that Manning's trial was about sending a message: the US government will come after you, no holds barred, if you're thinking of revealing evidence of its unlawful behaviour.”