

Rights Activists Pressure Barack Obama to Pardon Edward Snowden



New York, September 14 (RHC)-- In the United States, with less than five months left in Barack Obama's presidency, activists have launched an all-out campaign to lobby Barack Obama to pardon government whistleblower Edward Snowden.

The American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU, along with Amnesty International, are the key players behind the international campaign to "Pardon Snowden," which would allow Snowden to return to the U.S. without fear of prosecution.

Ed Snowden, a former CIA employee faces federal charges of espionage and theft of government property for his 2013 leak of classified documents detailing massive government surveillance programs.

Supporters say that Snowden helped to improve privacy laws and expose years of illegal activities by the U.S. government. The online petition at www.pardonsnowden.org, launches on Wednesday.

Ed Snowden is currently living in Russia in exile, and regularly communicates with the world via the Internet. He is scheduled to speak via video link at a press conference to launch the campaign where Oliver Stone's new biopic "Snowden" will be released in around 700 cinemas across the United States.

Supporters say that the film will help to raise awareness of Snowden's cause.

While Ed Snowden has been granted asylum in Russia, he says he does not want to die there and has remained optimistic that he will find a way to return to the United States. However, Obama -- who supporters believe is the most open to a pardon -- will leave office in January 2017. Obama has so far granted just 70 presidential pardons in his two terms in office, lower than any of his immediate predecessors who served two terms in the White House.

Hillary Clinton has depicted Snowden's actions as criminal and said he should be prosecuted. Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has called him a traitor to the U.S. who deserves to be executed for his actions, and claimed that he was a Russian spy.

Ed Snowden said that his decision to leak documents has expanded the national discourse on transparency and privacy in the U.S. and that nobody was harmed by his disclosures.

"For the exceptions, the things that may seem unlawful in letters on a page but when we look at them morally, when we look at them ethically, when we look at the results, it seems these were necessary things, these were vital things," Snowden told the Guardian from Russia.

In May, former attorney general for Obama, Eric Holder said that Snowden has performed a public service to the U.S for contributing to the debate on privacy, but still believed that Snowden should be put on trial and punished.

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