

U.S. court denies Manning's appeal, upholds contempt charges



Washington, April 23 (RHC)-- A U.S. federal appeals court has denied Chelsea Manning's request to be released on bail. The judge upheld a lower court's decision to hold Manning in civil contempt for refusing to testify against WikiLeaks founder, Julian Assange, before a grand jury.

Manning said, in a comment released by a spokesman, that while disappointing, the appeals court ruling will still allow her to "raise issues as the government continues to abuse the grand jury process."

Since March 8, Manning has been jailed after she appeared in front of a federal court in Alexandria, Virginia for a closed contempt hearing. U.S. District Judge Claude Hilton told her that she would remain in federal custody "until she purges or the end of the life of the grand jury" a statement from her representatives said. She has immediately placed in solitary confinement and released 28 days later on April 6th.

The lower court's decision was made due to Manning's refusal to testify, even after being offered "immunity," and answer questions about her 2010 leak of State Department and Pentagon documents about the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to WikiLeaks. "I don't have anything to contribute to this or any other grand jury," Manning added.

The former U.S. Army intelligence analyst was convicted by court-martial in 2013 of espionage and other offenses for leaking more than 700,000 documents, videos, diplomatic cables, and battlefield accounts. For this, she served seven years in a military prison and was granted clemency by former U.S. President Barack Obama.

However, on April 11, after Assange's arrest at Ecuador's Embassy in London, U.S. prosecutors in the Eastern District of Virginia unsealed a criminal case against him alleging he conspired with Manning to commit computer intrusion in 2010.

Assange's defense is now fighting extradition attempts by the U.S. While Manning's lawyer, Moira Meltzer-Cohen, suggests prosecutors are abusing "grand jury power," and that "the likely purpose of her subpoena is to help the prosecutor preview and undermine her potential testimony as a defense witness for a pending trial."

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