

PSYCHOLOGISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

October 1, 2016

Eric Fanning
Secretary of the Army
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310-0101

Dear Mr. Fanning:

Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) is deeply concerned about the recent ruling that subjects PFC Chelsea Manning to punitive solitary confinement after a suicide attempt in July of this year. As an organization of psychologists and other mental health professionals, PsySR is keenly aware of exhaustive [research](#) documenting the psychological harm caused by solitary confinement.

PsySR has twice communicated its concerns regarding the treatment of PFC Manning during the many months of pretrial detention in 2011, with letters to the [Secretary of Defense](#) and the [President](#). In 2010-2011 PFC Manning was held for almost three months in Kuwait, followed by another nine months of solitary confinement at the Marine Corps base at Quantico, Virginia. At that time, she was reportedly held in her cell for approximately 23 hours a day, with a bed (no sheets or pillow), a drinking fountain, and a toilet. She was forbidden to sleep during the day, her sleep at night was often disrupted, and she was often required to strip naked. After a lengthy investigation, the UN special rapporteur on torture [formally determined](#) that PFC Manning's treatment during that period was cruel, inhuman and degrading.

As mental health care providers and human rights advocates, we find it incongruous that a person would be punished for a suicide attempt and abhorrent that the punishment would be solitary confinement. The ruling by prison officials at the military correctional facility was based on [charges filed against Manning](#) on July 6, 2016. At that time she was charged with resisting forced cell moves; conduct which threatens; and prohibited property. The charge of "resisting forced cell moves" was subsequently dropped at the time of her hearing because she was judged to be unconscious at the time. The "conduct which threatens" refers to her suicide attempt, which "interfered with the good order, safety, and running of the facility." The "prohibited property" was a book.

PFC Manning was not allowed to have legal representation at the hearing and there is no publicly available transcript of the proceedings, which lasted approximately four hours. The information regarding her sentencing is from her [communications with her attorney](#) and others. Prison officials sentenced her to 14 days in solitary confinement, with 7 of those days suspended as long as there are no further violations of prison rules. [PFC Manning has 15 days](#) to appeal this ruling, once she has received written documentation of the sentencing.

Psychologists for Social Responsibility calls upon you, as Secretary of the Army, to immediately rectify the inhumane and harmful punishment of PFC Manning, rescind the current sentencing of solitary confinement, and address her mental health care needs in an appropriate manner.

Respectfully,

The Steering Committee of Psychologists for Social Responsibility