

By Glenn Greenwald

From [Salon.com](#) | Original Article

(updated below - Update II - Update III)

Amnesty International has [written a letter](#) to Defense Secretary Robert Gates objecting to the conditions of Bradley Manning's detention, which was

[first reported here](#)

. The group denounces the oppressive conditions under which Manning is being held as "unnecessarily harsh and punitive," and further states they "appear to breach the USA's obligations under international standards and treaties, including Article 10 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights." The letter describes Manning's treatment as particularly egregious "in view of the fact that he has no history of violence or disciplinary infractions and that

**he is a pre-trial detainee not yet convicted of any offence**

." Moreover:

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The harsh conditions imposed on PFC Manning also undermine the principle of the presumption of innocence, which should be taken into account in the treatment of any person under arrest or awaiting trial. We are concerned that the effects of isolation and prolonged cellular confinement . . . may, further, undermine his ability to assist in his defence and thus his right to a fair trial.

The letter follows [a report from Manning's lawyer](#) , former Lt. Col. David Coombs, that the conditions of his detention temporarily **worse** in the past week, prompting a formal complaint under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Amnesty's letter also follows [a report](#) that the U.N.'s leading official on torture is formally investigating the conditions of Manning's detention, a fact confirmed two weeks ago [by](#) [The New York Times](#) ("the United Nations' special rapporteur on torture, Juan E. Mendez, said he had submitted a formal inquiry about the soldier's treatment to the State Department").

Of course, caring what Amnesty International or the U.N. have to say about the conditions of America's detainees is so very 2004. Now, such a concern is -- to [borrow a phrase from Alberto Gonzales](#) -- a quaint and obsolete relic of the past.

Relatedly, the ACLU has [obtained new documents](#) which shed more harsh light on the 190 War on Terror detainees who died in American custody. Specifically, many of these documents -- autopsy reports and military investigations - - show that at least 25 to 30 of those cases were "unjustified homicides," i.e., murder. It's long been known that many detainees were killed by their treatment during interrogation. I wrote about many of these cases [here over a year ago](#) , and [Gen. Barry McCaffrey has said](#) : "We tortured people unmercifully. **We probably murdered dozens of them during the course of that, both the armed forces and the C.I.A** ." But these new documents show that these deaths at the hands of U.S. captors were even more deliberate, brutal and widespread than previously known:

In one such case, a detainee was killed by an unnamed sergeant who walked into a room where the detainee was lying wounded "and assaulted him ... then shot him twice thus killing

him," one of the investigating documents says. The sergeant then instructed the other soldiers present to lie about the incident. Later, the document says an unnamed corporal then shot the deceased detainee in the head after finding his corpse.

Appropriately, *The Weekly Standard* today has [an interview](#) with former Bush Attorney General Michael Mukasey in which he slams Eric Holder for the mere possibility that some of these detainee deaths will be criminally investigated, calling it a "witch hunt." That view is not an aberration, of course. The Brookings Institution's Benjamin Wittes

[last week criticized the Obama DOJ](#)

for merely leaving open the possibility of prosecution for some of these CIA interrogators who were so sadistic and lawless that they even exceeded the boundaries of the torture permission slips given to them by the Bush DOJ. Both Mukasey and Wittes are speaking for the consensus of America's political class. They -- and it -- literally believe that anyone acting as part of the American government should be able to get away with murder -- which they'll argue in between sermons on the evils of other nations' human rights abuses and the need for the U.S. to "do more" to stop such abuses.

**UPDATE:** As they have done several times before, Jane Hamsher today drove David House to visit Bradley Manning at the Quantico brig -- this time, as they announced ahead of time, House intended to deliver to brig officials [a petition relating to Manning's detention conditions](#) which has been signed by 42,000 people (only House is on the approved visitors list, so Hamsher typically drops him off, waits at a base McDonald's nearby (as she's been instructed to do), and then picks House up once his visit is done). Today, they went to the brig and House attempted to enter, the same way as always, but, as of

1:45

2:15 pm EST, both of them have been detained for

45 minutes

1 hour and 20 minutes, and told that they are not permitted to leave or else they will be arrested. They have now been told -- without explanation -- that they are not permitted to enter, and Hamsher's car is being towed off the brig's property and impounded. Here is

[House's live Twitter feed](#)

sent during this episode (start at the bottom and read up):

