

US congressman calls for prosecution of journalists over NSA leak

By Thomas Gaist
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Representative Peter King of New York said late Tuesday that he supports prosecution of journalist Glenn Greenwald who published material leaked last week by Edward Snowden. The leaks exposed two secret and unconstitutional programs run by the Pentagon-based National Security Agency that collect the electronic communications of tens of millions of Americans and hundreds of millions more around the world.

King, a Republican, said in an interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper: "If they [journalists publishing leaked material] willingly knew that this was classified information, I think actions should be taken, especially on something of this magnitude."

Asked directly whether he would support punishment of journalists, King replied, "The answer is yes, to your question."

On Wednesday, King was asked whether he thought *Washington Post* reporter Barton Gellman, who has also been in contact with Snowden and has written on the leaks, should be prosecuted.

"I'm talking about Greenwald," King told Fox News, claiming without any foundation that the journalist was threatening to release the names of CIA agents. "The last time that was done in this country, we saw a CIA station chief murdered in Greece." King added that the leaks released so far are "putting American lives at risk and this is clearly done to hurt Americans."

By the perverse logic of the state, attempts to reveal to the American people the unconstitutional actions of the government amount to efforts to "hurt Americans."

While King's remarks bear the fascistic sentiment that has become his hallmark, they are in fact entirely in line with the assault on press freedom that is being spearheaded by the Obama administration.

King's demands for prosecution of Greenwald come as the administration is preparing criminal charges against Snowden, with a Justice Department investigation already underway.

Top Democratic leaders, including Senator Dianne Feinstein of California, have declared Snowden guilty of treason, a capital offense.

King's remarks signal the intensification of the witch-hunt against whistleblower Snowden to a broader attack on press freedom and democratic rights.

They also come only a month after revelations that the Justice Department alleged that Fox News journalist James Rosen had engaged in criminal activity as part of newsgathering activities in obtaining classified documents from a government source. These allegations were used to secure an order from a judge to seize Rosen's emails.

The Obama administration has also carried out a vindictive campaign against WikiLeaks head Julian Assange and Private Bradley Manning for leaking evidence of crimes carried out by the US military.

Manning is currently facing a life sentence or possible capital punishment, while the US government is attempting to secure Assange's extradition to face charges under the Espionage Act—for actions essentially the same as those of Glenn Greenwald.

The attacks on Snowden and Greenwald illustrate the determination of the US ruling elite to strangle any opposition that emerges outside of its state controlled media apparatus, which works in close coordination with the State Department and the CIA.

Effectively, the ruling class is seeking to criminalize journalistic activity. Since the revelations first emerged, leading representatives from both capitalist parties have centered their efforts on downplaying the surveillance program's scale and scope and concocting

arguments to justify a massive and illegal spying operation directed at the American people.

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