

350 Fifth Avenue, 34th Floor
New York, NY 10118-3299
Tel: +1-212-290-4700
Fax: +1-212-736-1300; 917-591-3452

Kenneth Roth, *Executive Director*

DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS

Michele Alexander, *Development and Global Initiatives*
Nicholas Dawes, *Media*
Iain Levine, *Program*
Chuck Lustig, *Operations*
Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *Advocacy*

Emma Daly, *Communications Director*
Dinah PoKempner, *General Counsel*
James Ross, *Legal and Policy Director*

DIVISION AND PROGRAM DIRECTORS

Brad Adams, *Asia*
Daniel Bekele, *Africa*
Maria McFarland Sánchez-Moreno, *United States*
Alison Parker, *United States*
José Miguel Vivanco, *Americas*
Sarah Leah Whitson, *Middle East and North Africa*
Hugh Williamson, *Europe and Central Asia*

Shantha Rau Barriga, *Disability Rights*
Peter Bouckaert, *Emergencies*
Zama Coursen-Neff, *Children's Rights*
Richard Dicker, *International Justice*
Bill Frelick, *Refugees' Rights*
Arvind Ganesan, *Business and Human Rights*
Liesl Gernholtz, *Women's Rights*
Steve Goose, *Arms*
Diederik Lohman, *acting, Health and Human Rights*
Graeme Reid, *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights*

ADVOCACY DIRECTORS

Maria Laura Canineu, *Brazil*
Louis Charbonneau, *United Nations, New York*
Kanae Doi, *Japan*
John Fisher, *United Nations, Geneva*
Meenakshi Ganguly, *South Asia*
Bénédictte Jeannerod, *France*
Lotte Leicht, *European Union*
Sarah Margon, *Washington, DC*
David Mepham, *United Kingdom*
Wenzel Michalski, *Germany*
Elaine Pearson, *Australia*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Hassan Elmasry, *Co-Chair*
Joel Motley, *Co-Chair*
Wendy Keys, *Vice-Chair*
Jean-Louis Servan-Schreiber, *Vice-Chair*
Sid Sheinberg, *Vice-Chair*
John J. Studzinski, *Vice-Chair*
Michael Fisch, *Treasurer*
Bruce Rabb, *Secretary*
Karen Herskovitz Ackman
Akwasí Aidoo
Jorge Castañeda
Michael E. Gellert
Betsy Karel
Robert Kissane
David Lakhdir
Kimberly Marteau Emerson
Oki Matsumoto
Joan R. Platt
Amy Rao
Neil Rimer
Graham Robeson
Shelley Frost Rubin
Kevin P. Ryan
Ambassador Robin Sanders
Bruce Simpson
Donna Slaight
Siri Stolt-Nielsen
Darian W. Swig
Makoto Takano
John R. Taylor
Amy Towers
Peter Visser
Marie Warburg
Catherine Zennström

HUMAN
RIGHTS
WATCH

HRW.org

January 13, 2017

Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

I write on behalf of Human Rights Watch in support of the commutation of the sentence of Fort Leavenworth inmate Chelsea Manning to time served.

Following her conviction in 2013 by a US court martial in Fort Meade, Maryland on charges related to her disclosure of a large cache of government documents to online publisher WikiLeaks, Manning (then known as Bradley) was sentenced to 35 years of imprisonment. Human Rights Watch has long objected to the disproportionate nature of this sentence, which exceeds any other for US prosecutions of offenses related to the leak of sensitive information. It is also far longer than the penalties that are normally applied by most democracies for similar offenses, and undoubtedly will chill not only leaks of information the government has a valid interest in keeping secret, but also public disclosures of fraud, human rights violations, and similar wrongs.

Manning did not have an opportunity to defend herself on the basis that her disclosures in whole or in part were in the public interest, a serious flaw in US law to which the UN Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression and Access to Information has drawn [attention](#) again today. Commuting her sentence will send the message that punishment should always be proportionate, and that the public interest should be considered in all prosecutions of persons who disclose confidential information to the media.

We also note that Manning has faced continuing obstacles in obtaining appropriate gender-affirming medical treatment incarcerated, challenges which appear to have contributed to her attempts at self-harm.

For these reasons, we are pleased by reports that your administration is considering commuting Ms. Manning's sentence. We strongly encourage you to do so.

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maria McFarland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Maria McFarland Sánchez-Moreno
Co-Director, US Program