UN’s OHCHR Commends Chelsea Manning’s Commuted Sentence, Continues Retaliation Against Its Own Whistleblowers

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<https://www.whistleblower.org/blog/105923-un%E2%80%99s-ohchr-commends-chelsea-manning%E2%80%99s-commuted-sentence-continues-retaliation-against>

Here at the Government Accountability Project (GAP) we were encouraged to see the positive reaction from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at the news of US whistleblower Chelsea Manning’s commuted sentence on 18 January. The United Nations Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, Alfred D. Zayas, marked the occasion of the Manning commutation to [encourage all Governments to protect whistleblowers](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21097&LangID=E) instead of persecuting them.

I welcome the commutation of sentence of Chelsea Manning and her forthcoming release in May. There are, however, many whistleblowers who have served the cause of human rights and who are still in prison in many countries throughout the world. It is time to recognize the contribution of whistleblowers to democracy and the rule of law and to stop persecuting them.

I call on Governments worldwide to put an end to multiple campaigns of defamation, mobbing and even prosecution of whistleblowers like Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, the Luxleakers Antoine Deltour and Raphael Halet and the tax corruption leaker Rafi Rotem, who have acted in good faith and who have given meaning to article 19 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CCPR.aspx) on freedom of expression. Whistleblowers who are serving prison sentences in many countries should be pardoned.

At the same time, GAP notes that [the record of the OHCHR](http://www.codebluecampaign.com/carstatement/) in dealing with its own whistleblowers is less exemplary than one would expect. Anders Kompass and Miranda Brown, both of whom served in senior positions at the OHCHR and helped expose the sexual abuse and exploitation of children in the Central African Republic (CAR), have suffered harassment and defamation at the hands of Zeid Ra’ad al Hussein, the High Commissioner for Human Rights. After finding that Kompass had informed the French government of abuses allegedly committed by their forces in the CAR, Zeid first tried to force his resignation, and then tried to suspend him. When neither measure succeeded, Zeid appealed to the senior oversight official at UN Headquarters in New York, who placed Kompass investigated for leaking.

After Brown supported Kompass, she found that her contract was not renewed while she was on medical leave for a service-incurred illness.

[Kompass](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/07/child-sex-abuse-whistleblower-resigns-from-un) finally left OHCHR, [unable to continue working with Zeid](http://www.irinnews.org/news/2016/06/07/exclusive-top-un-whistleblower-resigns-citing-impunity-and-lack-accountability), a man who manifestly failed to protect either the child victims of sexual abuse or the whistleblowers who sought to help them. Brown remains unemployed, seeking compensation and reinstatement through the UN Dispute Tribunal.

As the [US Congress considers the credibility of the United Nations’](https://www.whistleblower.org/press/state-department-now-required-certify-un-whistleblower-program) pledge to support and protect the whistleblowers in its ranks from retaliation, incoming State Department officials may want to revisit the conduct of the High Commissioner when confronted with whistleblowers at OHCHR.

In this situation, as in most situations at the United Nations, the old adage applies: “Watch what they do, not what they say.”