

New York Times, Guardian call for Snowden clemency

WASHINGTON, USA: The New York Times and Guardian newspapers have called for clemency for US whistle-blower Edward Snowden for his revelations on US government spying.



Two major newspapers have called for clemency for whistle-blower Edward Snowden. Image: Wiki Images

The two dailies in separate editorials hailed the fugitive computer specialist, who has sought refuge in Russia after leaking reams of information about the secretive US National Security Agency and its data gathering programmes.

"By leaking the information he may have committed a crime but he has done his country a great service," the Times wrote.

"It is time for the United States to offer Snowden a plea bargain or some form of clemency," it said.

Britain's Guardian newspaper meanwhile urged Washington "to allow Snowden to return to the US with dignity," calling his revelations exposing the extent of Washington's electronic eavesdropping at home and abroad an act of "moral courage."

The Times called on the US government to offer Snowden a deal that would allow him to return home (and) face at least substantially reduced punishment.

The National Security Council, President Barack Obama's in-house forum at the White House for national security and foreign affairs, declined to comment on the suggestions, referring AFP to previous White House statements.

Obama rejects clemency pleas

Obama has said he welcomes debate about the NSA's role as he weighs possible changes to its broad powers, but has

refused to discuss the possibility of amnesty or a presidential pardon for Snowden.

In mid-December, the White House renewed its demand for the fugitive to return home to face trial. "Our position has not changed on that matter at all," White House spokesman Jay Carney said. "Mr Snowden has been accused of leaking classified information and he faces felony charges here in the United States."

Snowden leaked explosive details of the secret surveillance programmes to media including The Washington Post and The Guardian.

After fleeing the United States, he landed in Russia where he has been granted temporary asylum.

US federal prosecutors have filed a criminal complaint against Snowden, charging him with espionage and felony theft of government property.

The New York Times in its editorial rejected the US government's position that instead of leaking, Snowden could have received protection from prosecution under provisions in US law protecting federal whistle-blowers.

"That executive order did not apply to contractors, only to intelligence employees, rendering its protections useless to Snowden," the New York Times said.

Calls to offer Snowden clemency gathered steam when Human Rights Watch's executive director Kenneth Roth tweeted that "Snowden exposed major misconduct. Others filing official complaints were ignored/persecuted. He should be pardoned."

The newspaper editorials also echoed remarks made by Rick Ledgett, an NSA official who led a task force investigating damage from the Snowden leaks.

Ledgett told CBS television's "60 Minutes" broadcast last month that he would be open to a deal for Snowden if he stopped exposing US secrets.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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