

# PSYCHOLOGISTS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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## Open Letter on the Humiliating Treatment, Including Forced Nudity, of PFC Bradley Manning

March 9, 2011

The Honorable Robert M. Gates  
Secretary  
100 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Psychologists for Social Responsibility (PsySR) remains deeply concerned about the solitary confinement conditions under which PFC Bradley Manning is being held at the Quantico Marine Corps Base in Virginia. When we [wrote you](#) on January 3, 2011, we warned of the severely deleterious effects on the psychological wellbeing of those subjected to solitary confinement. We also expressed alarm over PFC Manning's subjection to cruel and potentially harmful treatment during this lengthy pre-trial period when he has not been convicted of any crime and is presumed innocent by our Constitution and justice system.

We write you again today because news reports, including those in the [New York Times](#), indicate that PFC Manning's conditions of confinement have recently become even more severe. According to these reports, which quote officials in charge of PFC Manning's care, PFC Manning is now being deprived of his clothes at night and is forced to stand naked for inspection in the morning. This is apparently being justified as a "precautionary measure" to prevent PFC Manning from injuring himself.

As an organization of psychologists and other mental health practitioners – many of whose members have worked in mental hospitals, the criminal justice system, and with veterans – PsySR can state unequivocally that removal of clothing is not an accepted or reasonable procedure for avoiding self-injury.

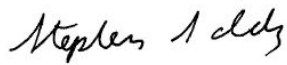
There is no publicly available information suggesting that PFC Manning is at heightened risk of self-harm. However, if this is a real concern of the military officials, it is imperative to recognize that forced nakedness (and solitary confinement) is designed to induce helplessness, humiliation, and shame – all of which are potential risk factors that *increase* the possibility of self-harm. We note that forced nakedness is so disturbing that it is banned for use by military interrogators in the 2006 Army Field Manual.

We are also concerned that the confinement conditions and treatment experienced by PFC Manning may interfere with the right to a fair trial. Literature on the harmful psychological consequences associated with the abuse to which PFC Manning is being subjected suggests that his ability to assist in his own defense may be compromised.

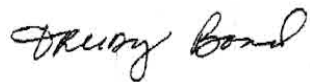
Our country and the entire world were shocked by the pictures of Iraqi detainees being kept naked at Abu Ghraib. PFC Manning's treatment, because of its needless and destructive cruelty, also shocks the conscience. Mr. Secretary, Psychologists for Social Responsibility calls upon you to rectify the inhumane and harmful treatment of PFC Bradley Manning immediately. Given your purported concern regarding PFC Manning's suicidality, we also urge you to release him from solitary confinement as soon as possible as a first step in addressing his mental health needs.

We are also providing a copy of this letter to President Obama, as he and his administration bear the ultimate responsibility for PFC Manning's treatment.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Stephen Soldz in cursive script.

Stephen Soldz, Ph.D., President, Psychologists for Social Responsibility

Handwritten signature of Trudy Bond in cursive script.

Trudy Bond, Ph.D., Psychologists for Social Responsibility Steering Committee

For the Psychologists for Social Responsibility Steering Committee