

Obama urged to end Edward Snowden's exile

Level 2 • Upper intermediate

1 Warmer

Who are these people? What are they famous for?

1. Richard Nixon
2. Tim Berners-Lee
3. David Petraeus
4. Edward Snowden
5. Loretta Lynch
6. Steve Wozniak

Scan the article to check your answers.

2 Key words

Match the key words with the definitions below. Then, find them in the article to read them in context. The paragraph numbers are given to help you.

attorney general campaign congressional disclosure exile intelligence
leniency misdemeanour pardon signatories untenable whistle-blower

1. a series of actions intended to produce a change _____ (para 1)
2. someone who reports dishonest or illegal activities within an organization
_____ (para 1)
3. information collected about the secret plans and activities of a foreign government, enemy etc
_____ (para 1)
4. relating to the group of people from the House of Representatives and the Senate in the US who are elected to make laws _____ (para 2)
5. impossible to defend as fair _____ (para 2)
6. a situation in which you are forced to live in a foreign country because you cannot live in your own country, usually for political reasons _____ (para 2)
7. the process of giving information to people, especially information that was secret
_____ (para 2)
8. the act of giving punishment that is not as severe as it could be _____
(para 3)
9. people who have signed a document _____ (para 4)
10. officially forgive someone for committing a crime _____ (para 6)
11. the head of the US Department of Justice _____ (para 7)
12. a crime that is not serious _____ (para 8)

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Intelligence experts urge Obama to end Edward Snowden's 'untenable exile'

Ed Pilkington

29 November, 2016

- 1 The campaign to persuade Barack Obama to allow the National Security Agency (NSA) whistle-blower, Edward Snowden, to return home to the US without facing a long time in prison has received powerful new support from some of the most experienced intelligence experts in the country.
- 2 Fifteen former staff members of the Church Committee, the 1970s congressional investigation into illegal activity by the CIA and other intelligence agencies, have written to Obama asking him to end Snowden's "untenable exile in Russia, which benefits nobody". The letter reminds the president of the positive debate that followed Snowden's disclosures.
- 3 They also remind Obama of the long record of leniency that has been shown by his own and previous governments towards people who have broken secrecy laws. They even write about how their own Church Committee showed that six US presidents, from Franklin Roosevelt to Richard Nixon, were guilty of abusing their power.
- 4 "There is no question that Snowden broke the law. But previous cases in which others broke the same law suggest leniency. And most importantly, Snowden's actions were not for personal benefit but were intended to bring reform. And they did so," the signatories write.
- 5 The Church Committee, or the US Senate Select Committee to Study Government Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, to give it its full name, operated in 1975–76 at a time when people in the US were worried about the way the federal agencies worked.
- 6 The most important signatories of the Obama letter are Frederick Schwarz, who was chief counsel to the Church Committee, and William Green Miller, the committee's staff director. Together with their fellow former committee members, they add strength to a campaign to pardon Snowden. The campaign has already attracted the support of prominent public figures including the co-founder of Apple, Steve Wozniak, philanthropist George Soros and Tim Berners-Lee, who invented the World Wide Web.
- 7 In their letter, which they have also sent to the US Attorney General, Loretta Lynch, the 15 mention the former CIA director David Petraeus as an example of the kind of official leniency that Snowden has so far not received. Petraeus broke the law and endangered national security by telling confidential information to his biographer and lover, then lied about it to the FBI.
- 8 "Yet, he was allowed to plead guilty to just one misdemeanour for which he received no jail time," the letter says. The reference to Petraeus is important at a time when the former military commander is being considered by President-elect, Donald Trump, to become US secretary of state.

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

- The Church Committee was ...
 - ... a religious group that was active in the 1970s.
 - ... set up in the 1970s to investigate illegal activity by US intelligence agencies.
 - ... a secret group of members of the CIA and FBI.
- The 15 signatories of the letter to Obama ...
 - ... have all lived in exile.
 - ... are former members of the Church Committee.
 - ... are former members of the CIA.
- They write that they believe Snowden ...
 - ... should go to prison in Russia.
 - ... should not have to spend a long time in prison in the US.
 - ... should not be allowed to return home.
- They say that Snowden's exile in Russia ...
 - ... is too easy for him.
 - ... is too difficult for him.
 - ... is not acceptable.
- They say that Snowden ...
 - ... broke the law.
 - ... didn't break the law.
 - ... should write new laws.
- They name Petraeus as an example of someone who ...
 - ... didn't go to prison after being in exile.
 - ... received leniency when he broke the law.
 - ... should have gone to prison for breaking the law.

4 Summarizing

Imagine that you are going to tweet the story. Summarize the whole article in 140 characters or fewer.

5 Rhetoric

Watch the video in the link below. Pay particular attention to the rhetorical strategies that Snowden uses to get his points across. What phrases does he use repeatedly?

www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/nov/29/edward-snowden-exile-church-committee-letter-obama-cia

6 Discussion

- Should Edward Snowden be pardoned or should he go to jail for a long time in the US?

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KEY

1 Warmer

1. US president (1969–1974)
2. inventor of the World Wide Web
3. director of the CIA (2011–2012)
4. NSA whistle-blower (He used to work for the NSA. He now lives in Russia after fleeing the United States, having revealed extensive internet and phone surveillance by US intelligence.)
5. US attorney general
6. co-founder of Apple

2 Key words

1. campaign
2. whistle-blower
3. intelligence
4. congressional
5. untenable
6. exile
7. disclosure
8. leniency
9. signatories
10. pardon
11. attorney general
12. misdemeanour

3 Comprehension check

1. b
2. b
3. b
4. c
5. a
6. b

5 Rhetoric

Repeated phrases: being able to ...; it's not about ...; not just ...