

Beat: News

Norwegian lawmakers nominate Snowden for Nobel Peace Prize

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USPA News - Two Norwegian lawmakers on Wednesday disclosed they have jointly nominated American whistle-blower Edward Snowden for the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize, saying he has made a "critical contribution" to restoring the balance between a country's need for intelligence and people's individual freedoms. Bård Vegar Solhjell and Snorre Valen, both politicians from Norway's Socialist Left Party, revealed their nomination on Wednesday in an open letter.

And while they indicated they may not agree with all of Snowden's disclosures, they argued that the former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor has made important contributions to a more stable and peaceful world. "Edward Snowden has revealed the nature and technological prowess of modern surveillance. The level of sophistication and depth of surveillance that citizens all over the world are subject to has stunned us, and stirred debate all over the world," the lawmakers said in their letter. "By doing this, he has contributed critical knowledge about how modern surveillance and intelligence directed towards states and citizens is carried out." Snowden, whose release of top-secret NSA documents have revealed details about the extent of the U.S. government's surveillance on phone and internet communications, has been charged by U.S. federal prosecutors with espionage and felony theft of government property. He remains in Russia where he was granted political asylum after fleeing Hong Kong. "The new information technologies of the past few decades bring new possibilities for democratization, transparency and freedom of expression. But it also introduces new tools of oppression, surveillance, and espionage," the lawmakers said in Wednesday's letter. "Massive surveillance of ordinary people's communication, and targeted surveillance against allied leaders, is now possible on a scale that we wouldn't be able to imagine two or three decades ago." Solhjell and Valen added: "A peaceful world order depends on trust between nations and trust between people. Peace brokering would be impossible without a basic level of trust. International agreements on non-proliferation and disarmament would be impossible without a basic level of trust. And peaceful resolutions to emerging security threats would be impossible without a basic level of trust." Nonetheless, the lawmakers admitted that Snowden's actions may have damaged the security interests of several nations. "We do not necessarily condone or support all of his disclosures. We are, however, convinced that the public debate and changes in policy that have followed in the wake of Snowden's whistleblowing has contributed to a more stable and peaceful world order," the said. NSA spokeswoman Vanev Vines did not immediately return requests for comment on Wednesday's nomination. Snowden had no chance to win last year's Nobel Peace Prize because the deadline for nominations was in February, well before Snowden fled the United States to begin his disclosures of top-secret NSA documents, which the Pentagon claims has prompted terrorists to change their methods. And while the official list of candidates is kept secret for 50 years, those who are eligible to nominate candidates are free to announce their choices.

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