

ANONYMOUS PRESS RELEASE

January 27, 2011



OPEN LETTER FROM ANONYMOUS TO THE UK GOVERNMENT

Dear UK government,

We are Anonymous. It has come to our attention that you deemed it necessary to arrest five of our fellow anons for their participation in the DDoS attacks against PayPal, Mastercard, and others, that have been carried out in our name in retaliation for those organisations' actions against WikiLeaks. We understand you are planning to charge these fellow anons with offences under the 1990 Computer Misuse Act, which prohibits impairing the operation of a computer or the readability of data. Anonymous believes, however, that pursuing this direction is a sad mistake on your behalf. Not only does it reveal the fact that you do not seem to understand the present-day political and technological reality, we also take this as a serious declaration of war from yourself, the UK government, to us, Anonymous, the people.

First and foremost, it is important to realize what a DDoS attack exactly is and what it means in the contemporary political context. As traditional means of protest (peaceful demonstrations, sit-ins, the blocking of a crossroads or the picketing of a factory fence) have slowly turned into nothing but an empty, ritualised gesture of discontent over the course of the last century, people have been anxiously searching for new ways to pressure politicians and give voice to public demands in a manner that might actually be able to change things for the better. Anonymous has, for now, found this new way of voicing civil protest in the form of the DDoS, or Distributed Denial of Service, attack. Just as is the case with traditional forms of protest, we block access to our opponents infrastructure to get our message across. Whether or not this infrastructure is located in the real world or in cyberspace, seems completely irrelevant to us.

Moreover, we would like to take this opportunity to set the record straight on the difference between a DDoS attack and hacking, as these concepts often seem to be confounded when media and policy-makers talk about Anonymous. Hacking as such is defined by the law as 'unauthorised access to a computer or network', whereas a DDoS attack is simply a case of thousands of people making legitimate connections to a publicly accessible webserver at the same time, using up the entire bandwidth or processing power of the given server at once and thereby causing a huge 'traffic jam'.

It is clear then, that arresting somebody for taking part in a DDoS attack is exactly like arresting somebody for attending a peaceful demonstration in their hometown. Anonymous believes this right to peacefully protest is one of the fundamental pillars of any democracy and should not be restricted in any way. Moreover, we have noted that similar attacks have also been carried out against Wikileaks itself, yet so far, nobody has been arrested in connection with these attacks, nor are there even any signs of an investigation into this issue at all. Yet, we know exactly who was responsible for that attack. Anonymous believes it is unfair and hypocritical to attempt to put these 5 arrested anons to trial without even attempting to find those who DDoS'ed a website which you oppose. We can therefore only assume that these arrests are politically motivated, and were being carried out under pressure from the US government. Anonymous can not, and will not, stand idle while this injustice is being done.

Furthermore, the maximum sentence these 5 anons could be given under the Computer Misuse Act is 10 years imprisonment and a fine of up to £5000. We want you to realize just how ridiculous these sentences are, especially given the exact nature of a DDoS attack and its lack of permanent damage to the target website. To hand out these kinds of harsh sentences (even to minors!) would effectively ruin their life, taking away their chance at higher education or even any kind of proper future, simply because they participated in a peaceful cyber-protest and stood up for their rights. A fine as high as £5000 would also put an incredible strain on the minors' families. We hope that you consider changing the legal framework for what is, at worst, a minor offence.

And last but not least: The fact that thousands of people from all over the world felt the need to participate in these attacks on organisations targeting Wikileaks and treating it as a public threat, rather than a common good, should be something that sets you thinking. You can easily arrest individuals, but you cannot arrest an ideology. We are united by a common objective and we can and WILL cross any borders to achieve that. So our advice to you, the UK government, is to take this statement as a serious warning from the citizens of the world. We will not rest until our fellow anon protesters have been released.

Awaiting your action,

Anonymous