



Speaking at a hearing to explore whether Wikileaks violated the Espionage Act -- which the Obama administration claims its editor-in-chief violated -- Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) said that "America was founded on the belief that speech is sacrosanct" and dismissed calls for censorship of media outlets publishing leaked documents.

"As an initial matter, there is no doubt that WikiLeaks is very unpopular right now. Many feel that the WikiLeaks publication was offensive," Conyers said, according to prepared remarks. "But being unpopular is not a crime, and publishing offensive information is not either. And the repeated calls from politicians, journalists, and other so-called experts crying out for criminal prosecutions or other extreme measures make me very uncomfortable."

The Obama administration and members of Congress from both parties have called for the prosecution of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange after the unauthorized leak of State Department cables, portraying him as a threat to national security.

But legal experts have pointed out the extraordinary difficulties in legally targeting the anti-secrecy outlet, and warned that doing so would set a dangerous precedent in which newspapers could be prosecuted for revealing unflattering information about the government.

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