

# Free Julian Assange!

## The Judicial Kidnapping of Julian Assange

By John Pilger

*“Let us look at ourselves, if we have the courage, to see what is happening to us.”—Jean-Paul Sartre*

Sartre’s words should echo in all our minds following the grotesque decision of Britain’s High Court late last year to extradite Julian Assange to the United States where he faces “a living death.” This is his punishment for the crime of authentic, accurate, courageous, vital journalism.

Miscarriage of justice is an inadequate term in these circumstances. It took the bewigged courtiers of Britain’s ancien regime just nine minutes on Dec. 10 to uphold a U.S. appeal against a District Court judge’s acceptance in January 2021 of a cataract of evidence that hell on earth awaited Assange across the Atlantic: a hell in which, it was expertly predicted, he would find a way to take his own life.

Volumes of witness by people of dis-

*continued on page 2 ...*



WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange.

## CIA Hijacks UK Judiciary for Vengeance on Julian Assange

By Raymond McGovern

Are the CIA and its contractors able to bully not only the U.S. Department of Justice, but also the UK judiciary? This is not hard to conclude after the High Court decision announced Dec. 10, 2021, to bow to the U.S. and extradite Julian Assange.

Underneath the pettifoggery, the decision demonstrates that the British will lop the “juris” off jurisprudence and pay heed

only to “prudence” in kowtowing to the security state in Washington and its junior partner in London.

The objective, of course, is to warn any journalist or publisher tempted to investigate and expose U.S. war crimes or political sabotage that U.S. “Justice” is going to get you, no matter who you are or where you live. (Call it a new wrinkle on the concept of “universal jurisdiction,” if you will.)

### All According to (Updated) Plan

Assange’s lawyers have said they intend to appeal the High Court decision. But, as Glenn Greenwald pointed out, “today’s victory for the U.S. means that Assange’s freedom, if it ever comes, is further away than ever: not months but years even under the best of circumstances.” That, of course, has been the plan for a decade or more.

Glenn also noted that post-Obama Democrats and their security state allies have a particularly potent reason to exact vengeance on Assange, who published those DNC emails showing that Bernie Sanders was cheated out of the nomination in 2016. Add the indignity suffered by the

els of offensive cyber tools, in which the CIA and NSA have invested billions. The security state had a witches’ brew.

In early July, I pointed to some graphic evidence that this was about bloodlust as well as vengeance, noting that the British were following the detailed “Washington Playbook” approach that was exposed by WikiLeaks itself in February 2012.

Some readers may recall that WikiLeaks-revealed confidential emails from the U.S. private intelligence firm Stratfor mentioned that the U.S. already had a secret indictment against the WikiLeaks founder. Bad enough.

### Inspector Javert

What also showed up in the Stratfor emails was the unrelenting, Inspector-Javert-type approach taken by one Fred Burton, Stratfor’s vice president for Counterterrorism and Corporate Security. (Burton



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CIA when an insider apparently leaked a treasure trove of unique documents on cyberwarfare. WikiLeaks promptly published parts of “Vault 7,” the family jew-

had been deputy chief of the Department of State’s counterterrorism division for the Diplomatic Security Service.)

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# Kidnapping

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tion, who examined and studied Julian and diagnosed his autism and his Asperger's Syndrome and revealed that he had already come within an ace of killing himself at Belmarsh prison, Britain's very own hell, were ignored.

The recent confession of a crucial FBI informant and prosecution stooge, a fraudster and serial liar, that he had fabricated his evidence against Julian was ignored. The revelation that the Spanish-run security firm

including those who described, from the depth of their experience and knowledge, the barbaric American prison system, was to be interrupted, abused, discredited. Sitting behind him, passing him notes, was his American conductor: young, short-haired, clearly an Ivy League man on the rise.

In their nine minutes of dismissal of the fate of journalist Assange, two of the most senior judges in Britain, including the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Burnett (a lifelong buddy of Sir Alan Duncan, Boris Johnson's former foreign minister, who arranged the brutal police kidnapping of

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*They offered no mitigation, no suggestion that they had agonized over legalities or even basic morality.*

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at the Ecuadorean Embassy in London, where Julian had been granted political refuge, was a CIA front that spied on Julian's lawyers and doctors and confidants (myself included)—that, too, was ignored.

The recent journalistic disclosure, repeated graphically by defense counsel before the High Court in October, that the CIA had planned to murder Julian in London—even that was ignored.

Each of these "matters," as lawyers like to say, was enough on its own for a judge upholding the law to throw out the disgraceful case mounted against Assange by a corrupt U.S. Department of Justice and their hired guns in Britain. Julian's state of mind, bellowed James Lewis, QC, America's man at the Old Bailey last year, was no more than "malingering"—an archaic Victorian term used to deny the very existence of mental illness.

To Lewis, almost every defense witness,

Assange from the Ecuadorean Embassy) referred to not one of a litany of truths aired at previous hearings in the District Court—truths that had struggled to be heard in a lower court presided over by a weirdly hostile judge, Vanessa Baraitser. Her insulting behavior toward a clearly stricken Assange, struggling through a fog of prison-dispensed medication to remember his name, is unforgettable.

What was truly shocking on Dec. 10 was that the High Court judges—Lord Burnett and Lord Justice Timothy Holyrode, who read out their words—showed no hesitation in sending Julian to his death, living or otherwise. They offered no mitigation, no suggestion that they had agonized over legalities or even basic morality.

Their ruling in favor, if not on behalf of the United States, is based squarely on transparently fraudulent "assurances" scrawled together by the Biden adminis-

tration when it looked in January like justice might prevail.

These "assurances" are that, once in American custody, Assange will not be subject to the Orwellian SAMS—Special Administrative Measures—which would make him an un-person; that he will not be imprisoned at ADX Florence, a prison in Colorado long condemned by jurists and human rights groups as illegal: "a pit of punishment and disappearance"; that he can be transferred to an Australian prison to finish his sentence there.

The absurdity lies in what the judges omitted to say. In offering its "assurances," the United States reserves the right not to guarantee anything should Assange do something that displeases his jailers. In other words, as Amnesty International has pointed out, it reserves the right to break any promise.

There are abundant examples of the United States doing just that. As investigative journalist Richard Medhurst revealed last month, David Mendoza Herrarte was extradited from Spain to the United States on the "promise" that he would serve his sentence in Spain. The Spanish courts regarded this as a binding condition.

"Classified documents reveal the diplomatic assurances given by the U.S. Embassy in Madrid and how the United States violated the conditions of the extradition,"

of imperial power, as history teaches us.

It is this institutional lying and duplicity that Julian Assange brought into the open and in so doing performed perhaps the greatest public service of any journalist in modern times.

Julian himself has been a prisoner of lying governments for more than a decade now. During these long years, I have sat in many courts as the United States has sought to manipulate the law to silence him and WikiLeaks.

This reached a bizarre moment when, in the tiny Ecuadorean Embassy, he and I were forced to flatten ourselves against a wall, each with a notepad in which we conversed, taking care to shield what we had written to each other from the ubiquitous spy cameras—installed, as we now know, by a proxy of the CIA, the world's most enduring criminal organization.

This brings me to the quotation at the top of this article: "Let us look at ourselves, if we have the courage, to see what is happening."

Jean-Paul Sartre wrote this in his preface to Franz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, the classic study of how colonized and seduced and coerced and, yes, craven peoples do the bidding of the powerful.

Who among us is prepared to stand up rather than remain mere bystanders to an epic travesty such as the judicial kidnap-



Photo: Ellen Davidson

Roger Waters and Susan Sarandon at a rally at the British Consulate in New York Dec. 13: 'Assange is absolutely vital to the survival of the planet.'

wrote Medhurst. "Mendoza spent six years in the U.S. trying to return to Spain. Court documents show the United States denied his transfer application multiple times."

The High Court judges—who were aware of the Mendoza case and of Washington's habitual duplicity—describe the "assurances" not to be beastly to Julian Assange as a "solemn undertaking offered by one government to another." This article would stretch into infinity if I listed the times the rapacious United States has broken "solemn undertakings" to governments, such as treaties that are summarily torn up and civil wars that are fueled. It is the way Washington has ruled the world, and before it Britain: the way

ping of Julian Assange? What is at stake is both a courageous man's life and, if we remain silent, the conquest of our intellects and sense of right and wrong: indeed our very humanity.

*Reprinted from CounterPunch.*

*John Pilger is an Australian journalist and war correspondent, a scholar, and documentary filmmaker. He has been mainly based in Britain since 1962. He is also currently visiting professor at Cornell University in New York. His career as a documentary filmmaker began with The Quiet Mutiny (1970), made during one of his visits to Vietnam, and has continued with over 50 documentaries since. His website is johnpilger.com.*

## Veterans For Peace Stands with Assange

It is up to us, the public, to stop the slow murder of Julian Assange. If this attack on journalistic freedom in total disregard of international law is allowed, then the march toward totalitarian control will crush every freedom we cherish.

Assange did something those who create wars can't forgive: He exposed U.S. war crimes to the whole world—the wholesale murder of innocents, the sadistic torture of human beings, the deception and the lying. Soldiers who participated in these wars and others are dying. U.S. veteran suicide is rampant.

Our mission in Veterans For Peace is to abolish war as an instrument of national policy. Assange's work, exposing the criminal horror of war, was a giant step in that direction.

We are at the point where we either abolish war or it may end life on earth.

This threat dangles like Damocles' sword over all humanity. Press freedom is just the tip of the iceberg. The oligarchic system of control, secure in its power, almost dares us to stop it. Perhaps they are confident that we can't or won't.

Mario Savio prophetically said years

ago, "There is a time when the operation of the machine becomes so odious, makes you so sick at heart, that you can't take part! ... And you've got to put your bodies upon the gears and upon the wheels ... upon all the apparatus, and you've got to make it stop!"

We have no choice but to actively resist in a sustained way until we stop this insane march to oblivion.

We have little time. The corporate, military, and governmental forces imprisoning and slowly killing Assange are also in the process—economically, militarily, and environmentally—of destroying life on this planet. Your survival and ours, as well as future generations, is at stake. That's why we need truth-tellers like Assange.

As Roger Waters says, "Assange is absolutely vital to the survival of this planet." It has never been more crucial for concerned citizens to organize and act decisively. Use this special edition as part of your resistance. Order more copies at [peaceandplanetnews.org/assange](http://peaceandplanetnews.org/assange).

—Susan Schnall  
President, Veterans For Peace

# CIA Hijacks

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Here's Javert—I mean Burton:

“Move him [Assange] from country to country to face charges for the next 25 years. But seize everything he and his family own, to include every person linked to Wiki.” [my comment: “country to country,” or—equally effective—court to court]

“Pursue conspiracy and political terrorism charges and declassify the death of a source, someone which could link to Wiki.”

“Assange is a peacenik. He needs his head dunked in a full toilet bowl at Gitmo.”

“Take down the money. Go after his infrastructure. The tools we are using to nail and de-construct Wiki are the same tools used to dismantle and track al-Qaeda.”

“Bankrupt the arsehole first; ruin his life. Give him 7–12 years for conspiracy.”

“Assange is going to make a nice bride in prison. Screw the terrorist. He'll be eating cat food forever ... extradition to the U.S. is more and more likely.”

Nice people—once sworn under oath “to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies foreign and domestic.” Since comparisons are invidious, apologies to “Javert” and Victor Hugo.

This saying of Julian's is one that we strong supporters are determined to hang onto—and believe, even when it stretches credulity: Throwing in the towel is not an

option. Inspiration can also be taken from the dismal-sounding, but nonetheless uplifting words of I. F. Stone:

“The only kinds of fights worth fighting are those you're going to lose, because somebody has to fight them and lose and lose and lose until someday, somebody

**Assange is a peacenik.  
He needs his head  
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who believes as you do wins.”

The late Kurt Vonnegut may seem like a strange person with which to close in this way, since he was the quintessential “humanist.”

“How do humanists feel about Jesus? I say of Jesus, as all humanists do, ‘If what he said is good, and so much of it is absolutely beautiful, what does it matter if he was God or not?’

“But if Christ hadn't delivered the Sermon on the Mount, with its message of mercy and pity, I wouldn't want to be a human being.

“I'd just as soon be a rattlesnake.”

I imagine that one part of that Sermon on the Mount Vonnegut may have had in mind was this: People are going to insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because



Photo: Ellen Davidson

you tell the truth. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. Know that you are in good company. They persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way.

Reprinted from *AntiWar.com*.

Raymond McGovern is a former CIA officer turned political activist. He was a CIA analyst from 1963 to 1990, and in the 1980s chaired National Intelligence Estimates and prepared the President's

*Daily Brief*. He received the Intelligence Commendation Medal at his retirement, returning it in 2006 to protest the CIA's involvement in torture. McGovern's post-retirement work includes commenting for Consortium News, RT, and Sputnik News, among other outlets, on intelligence and foreign policy issues. In 2003 he co-founded Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity (VIPS). His website is [raymcgovern.com](http://raymcgovern.com).



By Joe Lauria

LONDON—Julian Assange’s wife and one of his lawyers vowed June 17 to fight the decision of British Home Secretary Priti Patel to sign an extradition order earlier in the day sending imprisoned WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange to the United States to face trial on espionage and computer intrusion charges.

“This is the outcome that we have been concerned about for the last decade,” Assange lawyer Jennifer Robinson told a London press conference. “This decision is a grave threat to freedom of speech, not just for Julian, but for every journalist, editor and media worker.”

She said he faced up to 175 years in a U.S. prison for publishing material for which he has won numerous press awards as well as a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. “This should shock everyone,” she said.

“We are not at the end of the road, we are going to fight this,” Stella Assange, the publisher’s wife, told the press conference. “We are going to spend every waking hour fighting for Julian until he is free, until justice is served.”

She told the press: “I’m sure you understand the extremely serious implications this has for all of you and for human rights.”

Tim Dawson of the National Union of Journalists told the press briefing: “It is worth thinking through what that threat is from the position of an individual journalist. Any journalist in this room” who published classified material “will face the same risk.” He said journalists now had to ask themselves “is it worth the risk of going to prison for the rest of my life?”

Stella Assange said she had spoken to her husband just after he had learned of Patel’s decision. “It is very difficult for him to see third parties making life or death decisions on him based on politics,” she said.

Assange has been held in London’s maximum security Belmarsh Prison since his arrest in April 2019. He has been charged under the Espionage Act for publishing truthful information about U.S. government conduct. Stella Assange said the appeal going to the High Court “is setting legal precedent about the scope of press freedom in this country.”

She added: “What is decided at the High Court about the equivalence between the Espionage Act and the Official Secrets Act as it operates right now, affects all of you and your colleagues. He is one of you, whether you like it or not, because he is being prosecuted as one of you.”

### Patel’s Decision

The home secretary signed the extradition order the morning of June 17. A spokesperson for the Home Office said:

“On 17 June, following consideration by both the magistrates court and high court, the extradition of Mr Julian Assange to the U.S. was ordered. Mr Assange retains the normal 14-day right to appeal.

“In this case, the UK courts have not



Jen Robinson and Stella Assange at press conference June 17.

found that it would be oppressive, unjust or an abuse of process to extradite Mr Assange.

“Nor have they found that extradition would be incompatible with his human rights, including his right to a fair trial and to freedom of expression, and that whilst in the U.S. he will be treated appropriately, including in relation to his health.”

“We are going to raise points that have come up since the original extradition hearing back in 2020, and crucially one of the most important developments is the revelation that the CIA plotted to assassinate Julian while he was in the Ecuadorian Embassy, and kidnap him and rendition him,” Stella Assange added. “This is known to the home secretary but she

***“[T]he CIA plotted to assassinate Julian while he was in the Ecuadorian Embassy, and kidnap him and rendition him,” Stella Assange added. “This is known to the home secretary but she signed off on it anyway.”***

“It was in Priti Patel’s power to do the right thing. Instead she will for ever be remembered as an accomplice of the United States in its agenda to turn investigative journalism into a criminal enterprise,” WikiLeaks said in reaction.

### Coming Appeals Process

Robinson said Assange’s legal team have two weeks to file an appeal to the High Court and the United States has 10 days after that to answer.

“We still have our cross appeal points, which includes the free speech argument, his inability to get a fair trial in the United States, the political nature of the offense ..., the abuse of process in this case, including spying on Julian and us as his legal team, and a range of other points that will be raised,” Robinson said. Article 4 of the U.S.-UK extradition treaty bars extradition for political offenses.

signed off on it anyway.”

The CIA plot against Assange was corroborated by U.S. officials in a Yahoo! News report. Then CIA Director Mike Pompeo did not deny the report and called on those who leaked it to be prosecuted. Other points of appeal may be that a key U.S. witness on computer charges against Assange recanted his testimony. And Assange’s health has further deteriorated when he suffered a mini-stroke last October.

Robinson said the appeal process going forward could take from six months to a year. “If necessary we will appeal to the European Court of Human Rights,” she said.

In a separate case, the European court on June 14 blocked the home secretary’s order that a plane in London take off with Rwandan asylum seekers because of the dangers they faced upon return to their country. Consortium News asked Stella

Assange and Robinson whether they felt any encouragement from the court’s defiance of the home secretary as it may foreshadow the European court blocking a plane carrying Assange to the United States.

“The government is considering withdrawing from the European court,” Assange responded. Indeed, Britain has said it might pull out of the ECHR system in the wake of the Rwanda decision, a threat it has made before.

“It would be an incredibly concerning development if the UK withdrew from the European Court of Human Rights,” Robinson said. “And we of course hope that if we have to get that far, to the European court, that they will take the right decision, which is to prevent his extradition. If the UK withdraws from the court, that would be incredibly dangerous for every citizen in this country.”

### Calls on U.S. and Australian Governments

“We continue to call upon the Biden Administration to drop this case because of the grave threat it poses to free speech everywhere,” Robinson said. “And we continue to call on the Australian government to take action to protect its citizen.”

The recently elected Australian government issued a statement June 17 saying Assange’s case had “dragged on for too long and that it should be brought to a close.”

“We will continue to express this view to the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States,” Foreign Minister Penny Wong and Attorney General Mark Dreyfus said in the statement. There has been as yet no reaction from Washington.

“It is very difficult to describe what it is like for a family,” Stella Assange said. “Our resolve is redoubled for every decision that is taken, which is a travesty,” she told the media. “I mean I have no words to express what it’s like to see the UK process being used as a way to prolong Julian’s suffering.”

She added: “I have a lot support from millions of people that see this is wrong, and we’ve been wronged as a family.”

Stella Assange was asked how she will tell their two children that their father won’t be coming home soon. “I don’t see what the point is to tell them that,” she responded.

“I approach this situation as if Julian is on death row and I will spare them that knowledge.” She said they “make the most of it” during family visits at Belmarsh. “I want their memories of their father, of which they might have just some months left, to be positive and happy.”

She said “the other day, our eldest son, who is five, asked me who Mike Pompeo was because he had overheard me saying something about Mike Pompeo being a bad person. He said, ‘Who is Mike Pompeo and where is he?’ How do I say don’t worry about Mike Pompeo?”

“I am fighting every day for my husband’s life,” Stella Assange said, adding: “He should be free and everyone knows

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# Britain Moves to Extradite Julian Assange

*If President Biden really cared about press freedom, he would have canceled the extradition request months ago.*

By Peter Osborne

Every investigative journalist rightly reveres Daniel Ellsberg, the former U.S. Marine officer who exposed so many of the lies told by the U.S. government about the Vietnam War.

By leaking the Pentagon Papers to *The New York Times*, Ellsberg revealed the illegal U.S. bombing of Laos and Cambodia—and helped to end the war itself.

When WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange fought his desperate battle in London's Central Criminal Court to avoid extradition to the United States, Ellsberg tried to come to his rescue.

As well he might. Because the story of Julian Assange is an action replay of Ellsberg half a century later.

Ellsberg, like Assange, was put on trial for spying. Ellsberg, like Assange faced a lifetime in prison, only for the charges to be dismissed because of government misconduct against him.

He told the London Court that he felt an immense fellow feeling with the WikiLeaks founder.

In an important statement, Ellsberg—the doyen of whistleblowers—explained that while he was serving in Vietnam, detailed knowledge of U.S. war crimes remained confined to a tiny circle.

By contrast, he pointed out, more than 100,000 people had access to the Iraq and Afghan war logs leaked by Chelsea Manning.

This meant, said Ellsberg, “torture and assassination have been normalized.”

And it is certainly true that the WikiLeaks revelations has shone a horrifying light on crimes casually committed by the U.S. during the so called “War on Terrorism.”

WikiLeaks published a video of U.S. helicopter gunmen laughing as they shot at and killed unarmed civilians in Iraq. Fifteen individuals were killed in the attack, including a Reuters photographer and his assistant.

The U.S. military refused to discipline the perpetrators of this grotesque crime, who remain unpunished. But the U.S. government has thrown the book at the man who revealed their crimes.

WikiLeaks revealed that the total number of civilian casualties in Iraq was far greater than previously admitted by the U.S. government. It disclosed the abuse meted out to the inmates at Guantánamo Bay, as well as the fact that 150 innocent inmates were held for years without charge.

Clive Stafford Smith, who has represented 87 prisoners from Guantánamo Bay, paid tribute to the importance of the WikiLeaks revelations in enabling him to prove that the charges against his clients had been false.

Many other revelations, though less horrifying, were almost as embarrassing for the United States and its allies. I was in the Beirut 10 years ago when WikiLeaks revealed that the Lebanese defense minister had conspired with the United States to facilitate an Israeli invasion of his country in 2008.

WikiLeaks cables revealed how, over a two-and-a-half hour lunch with American diplomats, Elias Murr spelled out which areas of the country Israeli jets should hit. They also revealed that he had ordered

istrate court's decision in January last year not to extradite Assange because it would be oppressive to do so based on Assange's health and the dire conditions of U.S. solitary confinement. The High Court decided in favor of the United States based solely on Washington's conditional diplomatic “assurances” that it would treat Assange humanely.

Robinson said June 17 those assurances would be appealed to the European court after the Supreme Court refused to hear the case.

*First published by Consortium News. Joe Lauria is editor-in-chief of Consortium News and a former U.N. correspondent for The Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe, and numerous other newspapers, including The Montreal Gazette and The Star of Johannesburg. He was an investigative reporter for the Sunday Times of London and a financial reporter for Bloomberg News and began his professional work as a 19-year old stringer for The New York Times. He can be reached at joelauria@consortiumnews.com and followed on Twitter @unjoe.*



Julian Assange and Daniel Ellsberg.

the Lebanese army “not to get involved in any fighting and to fulfill a civil defense role.” This is just one example and thousands, and mercifully the 2008 assault never happened.

It's not hard to imagine the fury and embarrassment within the U.S. military establishment at disclosures like these. And it makes the U.S. determination to prosecute and convict Assange totally rational. They have the strongest possible incentive to make an example of him in order to warn others of the consequences of doing the same.

Any story that depends on obtaining documents from U.S. government sources will become impossibly dangerous. Any journalists concerned could find themselves subject to an extradition request.

The more serious the story, the greater the danger of extradition and prosecution.

A simple mental experiment demonstrates the damage the extradition of Julian Assange to the United States will do.

Let's imagine that a foreign dissident was being prosecuted by Russian President Vladimir Putin on espionage charges.

Let's further suppose that his true offense was bring to light war crimes committed by the Russian armed forces, including video footage of the slaughter of unarmed civilians and two Reuters journalists.

And that the U.N. special rapporteur on torture, after a long and scrupulous inspection of the evidence, had stated that this dissident displayed “all the symptoms typical for prolonged exposure to psychological torture.”

Now let's stretch credulity beyond breaking point. Let's suppose that President Putin was pressuring the United Kingdom to extradite the dissident to Russia to face trial on charges that could condemn that dissident to spend the rest of his life in a Russian maximum secu-

rity prison.

There would be outrage in Britain. Prime Minister Boris Johnson would make a statement on the floor of the House of Commons declaring that he would never bow to Russian pressure. Powerful editorials in every British paper would denounce Putin, while setting out Britain's respect for international law.

Yet Julian Assange in virtually in every respect faces identical circumstances to the fictitious Russian dissident I described above.

With one crucial difference: namely that it's Joe Biden's United States rather than Vladimir Putin's Russian which demands his extradition.

With the natural result that British Home Secretary Priti Patel has timidly given in to the US demand.

Patel is a notoriously authoritarian home secretary, but in truth I can't believe any of her predecessors—Labour or Conservative—would have reached a different decision. This is because Britain values beyond measure her security relationship with the United States.

Yet Britain and the United States love to boast about their commitment to media freedom. Patel's judgement shows that this claim is fraudulent.

If President Biden truly cared about media freedom he would have cancelled the extradition request months ago.

Such deep hypocrisy is a propaganda gift to Vladimir Putin. The Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Maria Zakharova used Assange's arrest three years ago to mock the double standards of the west. “The hand of ‘democracy’” she noted, “squeezes the throat of freedom.”

Point taken.

*Originally published by The Nation.*

*Peter Osborne is a columnist for Middle East Eye. His most recent book is Fate of Abraham: Why the West is Wrong about Islam.*

## Stella Assange

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it. The process is being used to hide atrocities from history. ... They have to tie themselves up in knots in order to allow this outrageous extradition. I think it's probably been extremely difficult for them to come up with some kind of semi-coherent argument. ...

“The UK should not be engaging in persecution on behalf of a foreign power that is out for revenge. That foreign power ... committed crimes that Julian put into the sunlight. Julian has done nothing wrong. He has done everything that any self-respecting journalist should do when given evidence of a state committing crimes—they publish it because their duty is to the public. And Julian's duty to the public has landed him in prison.”

The extradition order landed on Patel's desk after the UK Supreme Court refused to hear Assange's appeal against a High Court victory for the United States.

The United States had appealed a mag-

# Julian Assange Is Enduring Unbearable Persecution for Exposing U.S. War Crimes



Stella Morris, wife of Julian Assange, speaks during a protest outside the City of Westminster Magistrates Court in London on April 20, 2022.

By Marjorie Cohn

Ever since UK Home Secretary Priti Patel formally ordered the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to the United States last week, press freedom advocates around the world have been mobilizing.

Assange Defense, on whose advisory board I serve, is organizing a national and international campaign to pressure U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and President Joe Biden to drop the extradition request and dismiss the charges against Assange. The stakes could not be higher.

The charges against Assange, including 17 under the infamous Espionage Act, could result in 175 years in prison for the journalist who exposed U.S. war crimes.

Last week, Assange's brother, filmmaker Gabriel Shipton, wrote in an email to Truthout, "UK Home Secretary has decided today that any publisher who exposes national security information of an allied country may face extradition to two lifetimes in prison. Julian will appeal this decision and this once in a lifetime fight for freedom of the press continues."

Assange's indictment is based on WikiLeaks's 2010–2011 disclosures of U.S. war crimes in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the military prison at Guantánamo. Those revelations included 400,000 field reports about the Iraq War; 15,000 unreported deaths of Iraqi civilians; and systematic rape, torture, and murder committed by Iraqi forces after the U.S. military "handed over detainees to a notorious Iraqi torture squad." WikiLeaks also disclosed the Afghan War Logs, which are 90,000 reports of more civilian casualties by coalition forces than the U.S. military had admitted to. And its revelations additionally included the Guantánamo Files, 779 secret reports showing that 150 innocent people had been held there for years and documenting the torture and abuse of 800 men and boys in violation of the Geneva Conventions and the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

WikiLeaks also published the notorious "Collateral Murder" video, which documented how in 2007, a U.S. Army Apache helicopter gunship targeted and fired on

unarmed civilians in Baghdad. At least 18 civilians were killed. They included two Reuters reporters and a man who came to rescue the wounded. Two children were injured. Then, a U.S. Army tank drove over one of the bodies, severing it in half. That video contains evidence of three separate war crimes that are prohibited by the Geneva Conventions and the U.S. Army Field Manual.

As several civil liberties and human rights organizations declared in October 2021, when they asked Garland to dismiss the case against Assange, his prosecution poses a significant threat to First Amendment freedom of the press.

"The UK's decision to extradite Julian Assange to the nation that plotted to assassinate him—the nation that wants to imprison him for 175 years for publishing truthful information in the public interest—is an abomination," wrote Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg, and Alice Walker—co-chairs of Assange Defense—in reaction to Patel's extradition order. "The U.S. government argues that its venerated Constitution does not protect journalism the government dislikes, and that publishing truthful information in the public interest is a subversive, criminal act. This argument is a threat not only to journalism, but to democracy itself."

Trevor Timm, executive director of Freedom of the Press Foundation, warned that if Assange is extradited to the United States and convicted of the charges against him, it "would potentially make receiving classified information, asking for sources for more information, and publishing certain types of classified information a crime." Timm noted, "Journalists, of course, engage in all these activities regularly."

Moreover, Assange has suffered psychological torture while confined in the U.K. for more than a decade, according to Nils Melzer, U.N. special rapporteur on torture. In December 2021, Melzer tweeted that the "UK is literally torturing him to death."

On June 10, more than 300 doctors, psychiatrists, and psychologists calling themselves "Doctors for Assange" wrote to Patel that Assange's "deteriorating health" made it "medically and ethically unacceptable" to extradite him.

"Julian's 13-year persecution culminates in a decision of ostentatious callous indifference," John Shipton, Assange's father, told Truthout. "Who amongst us would not burn with indignation and loathing?"

Stella Assange, who recently married Julian in prison, called Patel's decision "a dark day for press freedom and for British democracy." She told the Associated Press, "Julian did nothing wrong. He has committed no crime and is not a criminal. He is a journalist and a publisher, and he is being punished for doing his job."

Yet UK officials disregarded Assange's health and the injustice of his prosecution, insisting that the United States would treat him "appropriately." In its June 17 statement ordering Assange's extradition, the UK Home Office wrote:

"In this case, the UK courts have not found that it would be oppressive, unjust or an abuse of process to extradite Mr Assange. Nor have they found that extradition would be incompatible with his human rights, including his right to a fair trial and to freedom of expression, and that whilst in the U.S. he will be treated appropriately, including in relation to his health."

But after a three-week evidentiary hearing, UK District Judge Vanessa Baraitser ruled in January 2021 that if Assange were extradited to the United States, he would likely attempt suicide because of his mental state and the onerous conditions of confinement in U.S. prisons.

The United States later came forward with qualified "assurances" that Assange wouldn't be kept in solitary confinement and the UK High Court reversed Baraitser's decision in January 2022. The UK Supreme Court affirmed the High Court's dismissal of Assange's appeal in March, paving the way for Patel's decision ordering extradition.

Amnesty International's Agnes Callamard—former U.N. special rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution—was skeptical of the so-called assurances that Assange would be treated humanely in U.S.

*Julian's 13-year persecution culminated in a decision of ostentatious indifference. Who amongst us would not burn with indignation and loathing?*

custody. "Diplomatic assurances provided by the U.S. that Assange will not be kept in solitary confinement cannot be taken on face value given previous history," Callamard said, referring to the United States reneging on past extradition assurances.

Assange now has until July 1 to appeal Patel's decision and apply to the High Court to reverse Baraitser's rulings on other issues Assange raised at the extradition hearing. They include:

- The U.S.-UK extradition treaty prohibits extradition for a political offense, and "espionage" is a political offense;
- Extradition is forbidden as the U.S. request is based on Assange's political opinions;
- The request for extradition is an abuse of process as it was made for a political motive and not in good faith;
- Extradition would be oppressive or unjust because so much time has passed;
- The charges against Assange do not comply with the "dual criminality test" because they encompass acts that are not criminal offenses in both the United States and the UK; and
- Extradition would violate Assange's rights to free expression and a fair trial, in addition to the prohibition against inhuman and degrading treatment in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Assange will also raise on appeal the CIA's plot to kidnap and assassinate him while he was in the Ecuadorian

*continued on next page ...*

# Assange Is Doing His Most Important Work Yet

By Caitlin Johnstone

British Home Secretary Priti Patel has authorized the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to the United States to be tried under the Espionage Act in a case which seeks to set a legal precedent for the prosecution of any publisher or journalist, anywhere in the world, who reports inconvenient truths about the U.S. empire.

Assange's legal team will appeal the decision, reportedly with arguments that will include the fact that the CIA spied on him and plotted his assassination.

"It will likely be a few days before the (14-day appeal) deadline and the appeal will include new information that we weren't able to bring before the courts previously. Information on how Julian lawyers were spied on, and how there were plots to kidnap and kill Julian from within the CIA," Assange's brother Gabriel Shipton told Reuters on June 17.

And thank goodness. Assange's willingness to resist Washington's extradition attempts benefits us all, from his taking political asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in 2012 until British police forcibly dragged him out in 2019, to his fighting U.S. prosecutors in the courtroom tooth and claw during his incarceration in Belmarsh Prison.

Assange's fight against U.S. extradition benefits us not just because the empire's war against truth harms our entire species and not just because he cannot receive a fair trial under the Espionage Act, but because his refusal to bow down and submit forces the empire to overextend itself into the light and show us all what it's really made of.

Washington, London, and Canberra are colluding to imprison a journalist for telling the truth: the first with its active extradition attempts, the second with its loyal facilitation of those attempts, and the third with its silent complicity in allowing an Australian journalist to be locked up and persecuted for engaging in the practice of journalism. By refusing to lie down and forcing them to come after him, Assange has exposed some harsh realities of which the public has largely been kept unaware.

The fact that London and Canberra are complying so obsequiously with Washington's agendas, even while their own mainstream media outlets decry the extradition and even while all major human rights and press freedom watchdog groups in the Western world say Assange must go free, shows that these are not separate sovereign nations but member states of a single globe-spanning empire centralized around the U.S. government. Because Assange stood his ground and fought them, more attention is being brought to this reality.

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*[I]t will always reek of hypocrisy when U.S. presidents like Joe Biden say things like "The free press is not the enemy of the people—far from it. At your best, you're guardians of the truth."*

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By standing his ground and fighting them, Assange has also exposed the lie that the so-called free democracies of the Western world support the free press and defend human rights. The United States, UK, and Australia are colluding to extradite a journalist for exposing the truth even as they claim to oppose tyranny and autocracy, even as they claim to support world press freedoms, and even as they loudly decry the dangers of government-sponsored disinformation.

Because Assange stood his ground and fought them, it will always reek of hypocrisy when U.S. presidents



like Joe Biden say things like "The free press is not the enemy of the people—far from it. At your best, you're guardians of the truth."

Because Assange stood his ground and fought them, people will always know British prime ministers like Boris Johnson are lying when they say things like "Media organisations should feel free to bring important facts into the public domain."

Because Assange stood his ground and fought them, more of us will understand that they are being deceived and manipulated when Australian prime ministers like Anthony Albanese say things like "We need to protect press freedom in law and ensure every Australian can have their voice heard," and "Don't prosecute journalists for just doing their jobs."

Because Assange stood his ground and fought them, U.S. secretaries of state like Antony Blinken will have a much harder time selling their schtick when they say things like "On World Press Freedom Day, the United States continues to advocate for press freedom, the safety of journalists worldwide, and access to information on and offline. A free and independent press ensures the public has access to information. Knowledge is power."

Because Assange stood his ground and fought them, UK home secretaries like Priti Patel will be seen for the frauds they are when they say things like "The safety of journalists is fundamental to our democracy."

Extraditing a foreign journalist for exposing your war crimes is as tyrannical an agenda as you could possibly come up with. The United States, UK, and Australia colluding toward this end shows us that these are member states of a single empire whose only values are domination and control, and that all its posturing about human rights is pure facade. Assange keeps exposing the true face of power.

There is in fact a strong argument to be made that even all these years after the 2010 leaks for which he is currently being prosecuted, Assange is doing his most important work yet. As important as his WikiLeaks publications were and are, none of them exposed the depravity of the empire as much as forcing them to look us in the eye and tell us they'll extradite a journalist for telling the truth.

Assange accomplished this by planting his feet and saying "No," even when every other possible option would have been easier and more pleasant. Even when it was hard. Even when it was terrifying. Even when it meant being locked away, silenced, smeared, hated, unable to fight back against his detractors, unable to live a

normal life, unable to hold his children, unable even to feel sunlight on his face.

His very life casts light on all the areas where it is most sorely needed. We all owe this man a tremendous debt. The least we can do is try our best to get him free.

*Caitlin Johnstone is a 100% crowd-funded rogue journalist, bogan socialist, anarcho-psychonaut, guerilla poet and utopia prepper living in Australia with her American husband Tim Foley and two kids. She writes about politics, economics, media, feminism and the nature of consciousness. She is the author of the illustrated poetry book Woke: A Field Guide For Utopia Preppers. Her website is [caityjohnstone.medium.com/](http://caityjohnstone.medium.com/). All her works co-authored with Tim Foley.*

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## Unbearable Persecution

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Embassy under a grant of asylum.

If Assange loses his appeals to the UK High Court and Supreme Court, he could appeal to the European Court of Human Rights. The appeals could take several months or even years.

The indictment against Assange has been assigned to U.S. District Judge Claude M. Hilton, who jailed former U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning in 2019 for refusing to appear before a federal grand jury investigating Assange. The indictment charges that Assange conspired with Manning to gain access to a government computer.

This the first time the United States has prosecuted a journalist or media outlet for publishing classified information. The extradition, trial and conviction of Julian Assange would have frightening ramifications for investigative journalism. On June 17, the editorial board of *The Guardian* wrote, "This action potentially opens the door for journalists anywhere in the world to be extradited to the U.S. for exposing information deemed classified by Washington."

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*Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, former president of the National Lawyers Guild, and a member of the national advisory boards of Assange Defense and Veterans For Peace and the bureau of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. Her books include Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral and Geopolitical Issues. She is co-host of Law and Disorder radio.*

# The U.S. Empire's Slow But Determined Execution of Julian Assange

*The journalist committed the greatest sin—exposing the imperial project as a criminal enterprise*

By Chris Hedges

Let us name Julian Assange's executioners. Joe Biden. Boris Johnson. Scott Morrison. Theresa May. Lenin Moreno. Donald Trump. Barack Obama. Mike Pompeo. Hillary Clinton. Lord Chief Justice Ian Burnett and Justice Timothy Victor Holroyde. Crown Prosecutors James Lewis, Clair Dobbin, and Joel Smith. District Judge Vanessa Baraitser. Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia Gordon Kromberg. William Burns, the director of the CIA. Ken McCallum, the director general of the UK Security. Let us acknowledge that the goal of these executioners, who discussed kidnapping and assassinating Assange, has always been his annihilation. That Assange, who is in precarious physical and psychological health and who suffered a stroke during court video proceedings on Oct. 27, 2021, has been condemned to death should not come as a surprise. The 10 years he has been detained, seven in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London and nearly three in the high security Belmarsh prison, were accompanied by a lack of sunlight and exercise and unrelenting threats, pressure, anxiety, and stress. "His eyes were out of sync, his right eyelid would not close, his memory was blurry," his fiancée Stella Morris said of the stroke.

a day." The executioners have not yet completed their grim work. Toussaint L'Ouverture, who led the Haitian independence movement, the only successful slave revolt in human history, was physically destroyed in the same manner, locked by the French in an unheated and cramped prison cell and left to die of exhaustion, malnutrition, apoplexy, pneumonia, and probably tuberculosis.

Assange committed empire's greatest sin. He exposed it as a criminal enterprise. He documented its lies, callous disregard for human life, rampant corruption, and innumerable war crimes. Republican or Democrat. Conservative or Labour. Trump or Biden. It does not matter. The goons who oversee the empire sing from the same Satanic songbook. Empires always kill those who inflict deep and serious wounds. Rome's long persecution of the Carthaginian general Hannibal, forcing him in the end to commit suicide, and the razing of Carthage repeats itself in epic after epic. Crazy Horse. Patrice Lumumba. Malcolm X. Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Sukarno. Ngo Dinh Diem. Fred Hampton. Salvador Allende. If you cannot be bought off, if you will not be intimidated into silence, you will be killed. The obsessive CIA attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro, which because none succeeded have a Keystone Cop incompetence to them, included contracting Momo Salvatore Giancana, Al Ca-

and white horse-hair wigs mouthing legal Alice-in-Wonderland absurdities. It is a dark reprise of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado* with the Lord High Executioner drawing up lists of people "who would not be missed."

I watched the latest installment of the Assange show trial via video link on Dec. 10. I listened to the reading of the ruling granting the appeal by the United States to extradite Assange. Assange's lawyers had two weeks to appeal to the Supreme Court, which they did. I am not optimistic.

The Dec. 10 ruling was devoid of legal analysis. It fully accepted the conclusions of the lower court judge about increased risk of suicide and inhumane prison conditions in the United States. But the ruling argued that U.S. Diplomatic Note no. 74, given to the court on Feb. 5, 2021, which offered "assurances" that Assange would be well treated, overrode the lower court's conclusions. It was a remarkable legal non sequitur. The ruling would not have gotten a passing grade in a first-semester law school course. But legal erudition is not the point. The

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*None of the 'assurances' offered by Biden's Department of Justice are worth the paper they are written on.*

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judicial railroading of Assange, which has eviscerated one legal norm after another, has, as Franz Kafka wrote, turned "lying into a universal principle."

The decision to grant the extradition was based on four "assurances" given to the court by the U.S. government. The two-judge appellate panel ruled that the "assurances" "entirely answer the concerns which caused the judge [in the lower court] to discharge Mr. Assange." The "assurances" promise that Assange 1) will not be subject to Special Administrative Measures (SAMs), which keep prisoners in extreme isolation and allow the government to monitor conversations with lawyers, eviscerating attorney-client privilege; 2) can, if the Australian government agrees, serve out his sentence there; 3) will receive adequate clinical and psychological care; and, 4) pre-trial and post-trial, will not be held in the Administrative Maximum Facility (ADX) in Florence, Colorado.

"There is no reason why this court should not accept the assurances as meaning what they say," the judges wrote. "There is no basis for assuming that the USA has not given the assurances in good faith."

And with these rhetorical feints the judges signed Assange's death warrant.

None of the "assurances" offered by Biden's Department of Justice are worth the paper they are written on. All come with escape clauses. None are legally binding. Should Assange do "something subsequent to the offering of these assurances that meets the tests for the imposition of SAMs or designation to ADX" he will be subject to these coercive measures. And you can be assured that any incident, no matter how trivial, will be used, if Assange is extradited, as an excuse to toss him into the mouth of the dragon. Should Australia, which has marched in lockstep with the United States in the persecution of their citizen, not agree to his transfer, he will remain for the rest of his life in a U.S. prison. But so what? If Australia does not request a transfer it "cannot be a cause for criticism of the USA, or a reason for regarding the assurances as inadequate to meet the judge's concerns," the ruling read. And even if that were not the case, it would take Assange 10 to 15 years to appeal his sentence up to the Supreme Court, more than enough time for the state assassins to finish him off. I am not sure how to respond to assurance number four, stating that Assange will not be held pre-trial in the ADX in Florence. No one is held pre-trial in ADX Florence. But it sounds reassuring, so I guess those in



Assange and Stella Moris.

His steady physical and psychological deterioration has led to hallucinations and depression. He takes antidepressant medication and the antipsychotic quetiapine. He has been observed pacing his cell until he collapses, punching himself in the face and banging his head against the wall. He has spent weeks in the medical wing of Belmarsh. Prison authorities found "half of a razor blade" hidden under his socks. He has repeatedly called the suicide hotline run by the Samaritans because he thought about killing himself "hundreds of times

pone's successor in Chicago, along with Miami mobster Santo Trafficante to kill the Cuban leader; attempting to poison Castro's cigars with a botulinum toxin; providing Castro with a tubercle bacilli-infected scuba-diving suit; booby-trapping a conch shell on the sea floor where he often dived; slipping botulism-toxin pills in one of his drinks; and using a pen outfitted with a hypodermic needle to poison him.

The current cabal of assassins hide behind a judicial burlesque overseen in London by portly judges in gowns



the Biden DOJ who crafted the diplomatic note added it. ADX Florence, of course, is not the only supermax prison in the United States that might house Assange. Assange can be shipped out to one of our other Guantanamo-like facilities. Daniel Hale, the former U.S. Air Force intelligence analyst currently imprisoned for releasing top-secret documents that exposed widespread civilian casualties caused by U.S. drone strikes, has been held at USP Marion, a federal penitentiary in Marion, Illinois, in a Communications Management Unit (CMU) since October 2021. CMUs are highly restrictive units that replicate the near total isolation imposed by SAMs.

The High Court ruling ironically came as Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced at the virtual Summit for Democracy that the Biden administration will provide new funding to protect reporters targeted because of their work and support independent international journalism. Blinken's "assurances" that the Biden administration will defend a free press, at the very moment the administration was demanding Assange's extradition, is a glaring example of the rank hypocrisy and mendacity that makes the Democrats, as Glen Ford used to say, "not the lesser evil, but the more effective evil."

Assange is charged in the United States under 17 counts of the Espionage Act and one count of hacking into a government computer. The charges could see him sentenced to 175 years in prison, even though he is not a U.S. citizen and WikiLeaks is not a U.S.-based publication. If found guilty it will effectively criminalize the investigative work of all journalists and publishers, anywhere in the world and of any nationality, who possess classified documents to shine a light on the inner workings of power. This mortal assault on the press will have been orchestrated, we must not forget, by a Democratic administration. It will set a legal precedent that will delight other totalitarian regimes and autocrats who, emboldened by the United States, will gleefully seize journalists and publishers, no matter where they are located, who publish inconvenient truths.

**The people in Afghanistan can tell you what U.S. 'assurances' are worth.**

There is no legal basis to hold Julian in prison. There is no legal basis to try him, a foreign national, under the Espionage Act. The CIA spied on Assange in the Ecuador Embassy through a Spanish company, UC Global, contracted to provide embassy security. This spying included recording the privileged conversations between Assange and his lawyers. This fact alone invalidates any



Photo: Ellen Davidson

*Assange, at tremendous personal cost, warned us. He gave us the truth. The ruling class is crucifying him for this truth. With his crucifixion, the dim lights of our democracy go dark.*

future trial. Assange, who after seven years in a cramped room without sunlight in the embassy, has been held for nearly three years in a high-security prison in London so the state can, as U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer has testified, continue the unrelenting abuse and torture it knows will lead to his psychological and physical disintegration. The persecution of Assange is designed to send a message to anyone who might consider exposing the corruption, dishonesty, and depravity that defines the black heart of our global elites.

Dean Yates can tell you what U.S. "assurances" are worth. He was the Reuters bureau chief in Baghdad on the morning of July 12, 2007, when his Iraqi colleagues Namir Noor-Eldeen and Saeed Chmagh were killed, along with nine other men, by U.S. Army Apache gunships. Two children were seriously wounded. The U.S. government spent three years lying to Yates, Reuters, and the rest of the world about the killings, although the army had video evidence of the massacre taken by the Apaches during the attack. The video, known as the Collateral Murder video, was leaked to Assange in 2010 by Chelsea Manning. It proved, for the first time, that those killed were not engaged, as the army had repeatedly insisted, in a firefight. It exposed the lies spun by the United States that it could not locate the video footage and had never attempted to cover up the killings.

The Spanish courts can tell you what U.S. "assurances" are worth. Spain was given an assurance that David Men-

doza Herrarte, if extradited to the United States to face trial for drug trafficking charges, could serve his prison sentence in Spain. But for six years the Department of Justice repeatedly refused Spanish transfer requests, only relenting when the Spanish Supreme Court intervened.

The people in Afghanistan can tell you what U.S. "assurances" are worth. U.S. military, intelligence, and diplomatic officials knew for 18 years that the war in Afghanistan was a quagmire yet publicly stated, over and over, that the military intervention was making steady progress.

The people in Iraq can tell you what U.S. "assurances" are worth. They were invaded and subject to a brutal war based on fabricated evidence about weapons of mass destruction.

The people of Iran can tell you what U.S. "assurances" are worth. The United States, in the 1981 Algiers Accords, promised not to interfere in Iran's internal affairs and then funded and backed the People's Mujahedin Organization of Iran (MEK), a terrorist group based in Iraq and dedicated to overthrowing the Iranian regime.

The thousands of people tortured in U.S. global black sites can tell you what U.S. "assurances" are worth. CIA officers, when questioned about the widespread use of torture by the Senate Intelligence Committee, secretly destroyed videotapes of torture interrogations while insisting there was no "destruction of evidence."

The numbers of treaties, agreements, deals, promises and "assurances" made by the United States around the globe and violated are too numerous to list. Hundreds of treaties signed with Native American tribes, alone, were ignored by the U.S. government.

Assange, at tremendous personal cost, warned us. He gave us the truth. The ruling class is crucifying him for this truth. With his crucifixion, the dim lights of our democracy go dark.

*Reprinted from Scheerpost.*

*Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning American journalist, Presbyterian minister, author, and television host. His books include War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning (2002), a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction; Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle (2009); Death of the Liberal Class (2010); Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt (2012), written with cartoonist Joe Sacco, which was a New York Times best-seller; Wages of Rebellion: The Moral Imperative of Revolt (2015); and his most recent, America: The Farewell Tour (2018). He writes a regular original column for ScheerPost.*



# Why We Must Defend Julian Assange

By Margaret Kimberley

Julian Assange is one of the political prisoners that the United States claims not to have. The UK is again the good vassal, keeping him locked up until the Biden administration finds an opportune time to ship him off to a kangaroo court. Everyone who believes in press freedom and who opposes imperialism must be a staunch Assange defender.

Dec. 10 is International Human Rights Day. It is always a sham holiday for the United States, which locks up its own people at rates exceeding those of every other country, and routinely makes war against the rest of the world. In 2021 the date was treated as even more of a

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*Over a period of years,  
his organization, WikiLeaks,  
revealed U.S. crimes committed  
around the world.*

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mockery than in the past. Joe Biden convened a bizarre democracy summit, wherein he declared other nations good or bad based on whether they go along with the dictates of the U.S. empire, but it was in London where the United States behaved in a particularly shameful manner, working with the United Kingdom to secure the right to extradite Julian Assange.

In 2018, Assange was indicted in the Eastern District Court of Virginia, a hanging court where acquittals are rare. His offense is one that the system will not tolerate. Over a period of years, his organization, WikiLeaks, revealed U.S. crimes committed around the world.

Assange ran afoul of four different U.S. presidents, Republicans and Democrats alike. WikiLeaks revealed war crimes committed during the George W. Bush Administration in their Iraq War Logs and Afghanistan War Logs. Private Chelsea Manning leaked the Collateral Murder video, which shows the deaths of civilians, including two Reuters reporters, as they were gunned down by a U.S. Army helicopter crew in 2007.

Collateral Murder was released in 2010, when Barack Obama was president. All of the purported differences between Democrats and Republicans disappear when U.S. hegemony is in need of protection. Obama's attorney general, Eric Holder, confirmed that Assange was



under investigation. While the Justice Department ultimately chose not to indict, they laid the groundwork for Donald Trump to make Assange a political prisoner. Obama's unprecedented use of the Espionage Act sent other whistleblowers to jail and gave Trump license to get his hands on Assange. Joe Biden, following Trump policy, has continued the Assange persecution.

The Trump Administration built on the work of the Obama DOJ and secured a 17-count indictment in 2018,



with charges that could result in a 175-year sentence. Of course, they didn't stop with criminal charges, which were useless as long as the Ecuadorian government gave Assange sanctuary in its London embassy. The Trump Administration secured a \$4 billion IMF loan for Ecuador, just one month before Assange's protections were

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*What is especially disheartening  
is the way that journalists have  
abandoned Assange.*

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lifted. The timing of the transaction and the arrest were clearly not coincidental.

It isn't surprising that presidents wage war against the truth tellers of the world. What is especially disheartening is the way that journalists have abandoned Assange and turned into U.S. government spokespeople if they discuss his case at all.

Media outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Guardian* worked with Assange for years, printing WikiLeaks revelations on a regular basis. Yet they have said little in his defense ever since he was arrested on April 11, 2019. Neither have the liberal elites, who parrot the falsehood that Assange is responsible for Hillary Clinton's 2016 defeat. According to Democratic propagandists, Russian operatives hacked the Democratic National Committee computers and gave a trove of embarrassing emails to WikiLeaks. Hillary Clinton even refers to the organization as "Russian WikiLeaks" just in case anyone forgot to blame others for her political debacle.

Of course, WikiLeaks received the DNC documents the same way they received all others. A whistleblower leaked the material and the rest is history. Except history didn't turn out as most people predicted. Hillary Clinton lost, in large part because of the corrupt behaviors that

Assange revealed.

The DNC revelations were as big a threat as the war logs. Assange exposed how the Clinton campaign amplified Trump, in a mistaken belief that he would be the easiest Republican to defeat. They also proved that the primary process was rigged against Bernie Sanders, who would have been the better candidate. The revelations had to be squelched and the need to turn Assange into a scapegoat only intensified over time. Russiagate was the

means of vilification and made him persona non grata with people who might have been his defenders.

The Collateral Murder video shows the killing of two Iraqis who were employed by Reuters in Baghdad. One would think that some professional courtesy would be extended to their memories, if only for appearance sake. But that isn't how corporate media operate. They work on behalf of the state and they conveniently forget their past relationship with WikiLeaks and the killings of their colleagues so that they might stay in the good graces of the people prosecuting Assange.

Ultimately the United States and UK couldn't be bad actors at all if powerful media organizations behaved like independent entities and not as an arm of the state. Assange has no influential friends and sits in Belmarsh prison, having suffered a stroke on Oct. 27, 2021. His physical and mental health deteriorate while unscrupulous people in London and Washington decide his fate.

The corrupt process must be exposed and all Assange supporters must speak up. The United States should not be allowed to use the Espionage Act or any other mechanism to snatch up anyone, anywhere, and hit them with criminal charges of dubious legality. If they are allowed to do so in this case they will certainly do it again. Anyone who wants to expose high crimes will find themselves in Assange's position. People who oppose the empire and its machinations are all at risk if Assange is extradited and stands trial in the Eastern District court. He is a political prisoner, and others will be too if the prosecution proceeds. It is no exaggeration to say that we are all Julian Assange.

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*Margaret Kimberley's column, "Freedom Rider," appears weekly at Black Agenda Report and is widely reprinted. She is the author of Prejudicial: Black America and the Presidents. Her work can also be found at patreon.com/margaretkimberley and on Twitter @freedomrideblog. She can be reached at Margaret.Kimberley@BlackAgendaReport.com.*

# The Case of Julian Assange: Rule of Law Undermined

*Injustice, torture, political persecution—U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer raises serious allegations in his new book, backed up by the results of a two-year investigation.*

By Matthias von Hein

A journalist uses a new platform to expose the dirty secrets of powerful governments, including war crimes, corruption, and torture. However, it isn't the war criminals and torturers who are punished, but the journalist who brought these crimes to light. His reputation is systematically destroyed, his freedom is taken away, he suffers psychological torture. All this happens not in a military dictatorship or a one-party state known for such behavior, but in Western democracies that portray themselves as shining examples when it comes to human rights.

This is the story of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, as told by Nils Melzer, U.N. special rapporteur on torture. It's a disturbing story, one that a reader might want to forget altogether. That's because it raises strong doubts about the strength of our justice system in the face of powerful interests that manipulate and abuse it. Over two years, the Swiss professor of international law compiled a wealth of evidence to support his arguments, the result of which is now a 300-page book.

## 'Continuation of Diplomacy by Other Means'

The 51-year-old Melzer hopes his book will create new pressure for Julian Assange's release. He feels compelled to act because the nations concerned—the

cerning Assange, but in December, Britain's High Court overturned that ruling. Assange's lawyers filed an appeal of that decision on Dec. 24, and the problems surrounding his case are far from solved.

*[W]hat bothers Melzer so much about Assange's case is that it 'exposes a fundamental systemic failure that severely undermines the integrity of our democratic, rule-of-law institutions.'*

He still faces a 175-year prison sentence in the United States. He is being held in the high-security Belmarsh prison, often described as "Britain's Guantánamo," still awaiting a final verdict after more than two years.

Christian Mihr, executive director of Reporters Without Borders Germany, calls the court "inhumane" for its refusal to release Assange pending an appeal hearing, or at least to grant him house arrest. Mihr told Deutsche Welle: "This decision was just the latest in a long line



U.N. Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer at a press conference.

United States, Great Britain, Sweden, and Ecuador—have refused to engage in constructive dialogue. Not only that, but according to Melzer's observations, they are exacerbating Assange's persecution and mistreatment. The U.N. representative calls his book the "continuation of diplomacy by other means."

In early January 2021, a London court rejected a U.S. extradition request con-

of disproportionately harsh punitive measures against Assange. No one should have to go through what he has over the past 10 years, just for publishing information that was in the public interest."

In his role at the United Nations, Nils Melzer has to deal with many cases of torture and mistreatment, including very serious ones. According to his book, what bothers him so much about Assange's



case is that it "exposes a fundamental systemic failure that severely undermines the integrity of our democratic, rule-of-law institutions."

Heike Hänsel, a vice-chairwoman of the Left Party in the German parliament [Bundestag], agrees. Responding to a query from DW, she wrote: "The extraterritorial political persecution of Julian Assange by the United States government, carried out by the British and Swedish judiciaries, is an act of judicial arbitrariness." In light of EU and NATO states' "deafening silence in response to the persecution of an investigative journalist on European soil, and their indifference to his untenable prison conditions," the lawmaker spoke of "incredible double standards and a systemic failure."

## 'Litmus Test for Shared Western Values'

Lawmakers from other parties in the Bundestag are of a similar opinion. At the end of last year, the cross-party working group "Freedom for Julian Assange" was founded. The media policy spokeswoman for the Greens, Margit Stumpp, is one of its members. Speaking to DW, Stumpp emphasized the global significance of the war crimes and corruption revealed by WikiLeaks. She added: "The extradition case in the UK isn't just about freedom of information and freedom of the press, but also about the credibility of the European community as an advocate for human rights. The proceedings are a litmus test for shared Western values."

The fact that the Assange prosecution has massively undermined the West's credibility as human rights advocate is well understood by dictators around the world. In early November, for example, BBC correspondent Orla Guerin asked Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev critical questions about press freedom in his country. He replied coolly that in view of its treatment of Assange, the United Kingdom had no right to reproach other nations over human rights or press freedom.

For Melzer, there's no doubt that character assassination played a big role in allowing Assange, an investigative journalist who was much lauded before 2010,

to be mercilessly persecuted for a decade with little public outcry. In his book, Melzer meticulously describes how the Swedish judiciary portrayed Julian Assange as a rapist for years, without giving him the chance to respond. It was not until November 2019 that Sweden's nine-year-long proceeding against Assange finally ended, after Melzer sent an official letter listing 50 indications of serious procedural violations and demanding answers to his questions.

Left party lawmaker Heike Hänsel credits Nils Melzer's work for the fact that "the smear campaign against Julian Assange by perpetuating rape allegations for years has finally been stopped and the Assange case has received more international attention in parliaments, the United Nations, and governments."

## Germany Equivocates

Germany also features in Nils Melzer's book, as a country that, despite its experience of dictatorship and the surveillance state, is "unable to effectively counter similar developments in allied states or even to express a clear opinion on them." By way of illustration, Melzer points to statements made by Foreign Minister Heiko Maas during a press conference in the Bundestag on Oct. 7, 2020. Maas first spoke out in sharp terms about the poisoning of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny.


In the same questioning, however, the German foreign minister was also asked about the Assange case—and responded in a far less combative manner. Maas asserted that the German government had no information to suggest "violations of international law in either the accommodation or treatment of Julian Assange."

According to Melzer, this is clearly wrong, because a year earlier he himself had given the government just that. He writes that on Nov. 26, 2019, he personally visited the Foreign Ministry and explained the most important violations of international law.


Matthias von Hein is a journalist and correspondent with Deutsche Welle, the German international broadcasting organization.

# Learn More, Take Action

Write to Julian at:  
Mr. Julian Assange, Prisoner #A9379AY  
HMP Belmarsh, Western Way  
London SE28 0EB, UK


 Write To  
Julian Assange

Join the  
**Mass Letter Writing  
Campaign**



Go to  
[writejulian.com](http://writejulian.com)

Mr Julian Assange  
Prisoner #: A9379AY  
HMP Belmarsh  
Western Way  
London SE28 0EB




## ... and more

- **A most effective action is to call U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland at (202) 514-2000 (press 9 at any time to skip the options) and/or write (use the form at [justice.gov/contact-us](http://justice.gov/contact-us)) and tell him to drop all charges against Julian Assange.**
- Write, email or call or a politician/leader or person of influence to inform them about Julian's case and ask them to act. Write Julian to let him know what you have done.
- Write to consulates around the world of the countries who will be meeting with President Biden.
- Write U.S. officials and ask them to drop the charges that the Trump administration brought forward against Assange.
- In the UK, take action to defend press freedom and to ensure that the UK does not extradite him.
- In Australia take action to ensure that the Australian government intervenes to demand his freedom and to bring him home safely.

**ASSANGE DEFENSE**

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**Defend press freedom, defend Julian Assange**



The appeal hearing in Julian Assange's extradition case was held October 27-28. A ruling is expected within weeks. Coverage →

The Assange Defense Committee is a U.S. coalition fighting to free WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. Join us →

**Sign the petition at [assangedefense.org](http://assangedefense.org)**

**Learn More About Veterans For Peace!**





Photo: Ellen Davidson

This publication was produced by the New York City chapter of Veterans For Peace, an international organization made up of military veterans, military family members, and allies. We are dedicated to building a culture of peace, exposing the true causes and costs of war, and healing the wounds of war.

For more information or to join or donate, scan the QR code at left or visit [veteransforpeace.org](http://veteransforpeace.org).



## Veterans For Peace Statement

# Drop the Charges and Free Julian Assange

Imprisoned journalist Julian Assange faces life behind bars for telling the truth about U.S. war crimes in Iraq, Afghanistan and at the U.S. torture base in Guantanamo Bay. The party that committed those crimes continues to vindictively and relentlessly pursue him more than a decade later. Currently, Assange is being held in brutal isolation at Belmarsh prison in the United Kingdom on behalf of the United States.

Assange, the founder of the WikiLeaks Internet news outlet, faces U.S. extradition on charges under the 1917 U.S. Espionage Act. Yet, Assange is not an American citizen, nor was he on American soil when he published the classified documents in question. Assange worked with traditional news outlets to redact the documents and publish the documents responsibly. These files were voluntarily sent to WikiLeaks by Chelsea Manning, a U.S. Army Intelligence Analyst stationed in Iraq at the time—a fact that Manning described in detail during her military trial.

Manning was eventually

granted clemency by President Obama in 2017, following years of advocacy by Veterans For Peace and other supporters. During that time, the Obama administration recognized that prosecuting Assange would create a "NY Times problem", based on unmistakable similarities to the publication of the Pentagon Papers. Inexplicably, the Biden administration has continued in former-President Trump's footsteps in targeting Assange.

As military veterans from WWII to the current era of conflicts, who have trained for, and in many cases, fought in U.S. wars—often in the name of democratic values such as freedom of the press, free speech, and free journalists—we demand that our own government respect those principles now.

Veterans For Peace calls upon the Biden Administration, specifically Attorney General Merrick Garland and the US Department of Justice, to drop all charges against journalist Julian Assange and ensure his immediate release and freedom.

—January 22, 2022