

35 MPs and Lords Demand US Attorney General Drops Charges Against Assange on Fourth Anniversary of His Imprisonment

By [Morning Star](#)

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Thirty-five British parliamentarians have written to the US attorney general on the fourth anniversary of Julian Assange's imprisonment to demand Washington drop its efforts to extradite him.

The MPs and lords from six parties stress that Mr Assange faces up to 175 years in a US jail "for his publishing work which was carried out in the United Kingdom and in partnership with globally leading news outlets."

They warn that the extradition of an award-winning journalist and publisher "would have a chilling impact on journalism and set a dangerous precedent for other journalists and media organisations. It would also undermine the US's reputation on freedom of expression and the rule of law."

US Attorney General Merrick B Garland should end extradition proceedings and uphold the first amendment of the US constitution, which concerns the right to free speech, so that the WikiLeaks founder can return home to Australia.

Today marks the fourth anniversary of Mr Assange's imprisonment in London's Belmarsh prison. He was taken there after the Ecuadorean embassy, where he had been living in sanctuary since 2012 having been granted political asylum by the country, invited British police in to arrest him following the Lenin Moreno government's renegeing on the socialist principles of its predecessor.

The US authorities want to try Mr Assange under the Espionage Act for publishing classified material he was handed by whistleblowers.

Much of the material exposed war crimes, such as the massacre of Iraqi civilians by US attack helicopters or the number of Afghan civilians killed by US bombing.

Leeds East MP Richard Burgon, who organised the letter, said: "British parliamentarians are increasingly alarmed by the potential extradition of Julian Assange to the United States.

"Any extradition would, in effect, be putting press freedom on trial. It would set a dangerous precedent for journalists and publishers around the world.

"Four years on since Julian Assange was first detained in Belmarsh high-security prison, now is the right moment to draw a line under this outrageous prosecution initiated by the Trump administration [and] drop the charges."

Signatories include former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, 14 Labour MPs, Tory MP David Davis, Green MP Caroline Lucas, Claudia Webbe, Plaid Cymru MP Liz Saville-Roberts, two SNP MPs and Kenny MacAskill from the Alba Party. It was also signed by cross-bench, Labour, Lib Dem and Tory peers.

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Featured image: Campaigners pressing for the release of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange take part in a demonstration during a Night Carnival in Parliament Square in London, February 11, 2023

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