

Assange's Final UK Court 'Moment of Truth' Arrives as Wife Warns He 'Will Die' If Extradited to the US

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Global Research, February 19, 2024

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Region: [Europe, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

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Tuesday, February 21 is the big day and 'moment of truth' for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and his legal team. That is when two high court judges in London will hear arguments on whether Assange can appeal a ruling to extradite him to the United States, where he would most certainly spend the rest of his life in prison, likely in a harsh 'supermax' federal facility. The hearing is scheduled through Wednesday.

Stella Assange, his wife, has warned that if the judges rule against Assange, he could be on a plane to US soil in a matter of days. He would be removed from the high security Belmarsh prison for a trial in the US on espionage-related charges and publishing state secrets, where a 175 year jail sentence would await him.

His wife told a Thursday press briefing,

"It is the final hearing if it does not go Julian's way, there is no possibility to appeal to the supreme court or anywhere else in this jurisdiction."

She said [further](#) that situation is "extremely grave" given his health continues to be "in decline". She warned: "If he is extradited, he will die."

The Guardian has meanwhile commented on US authorities' attempts to bully journalists who worked with Assange to [turn against him](#):

At least four well-known journalists have been approached by the Metropolitan police on behalf of the FBI: [James Ball](#), his ex-WikiLeaks colleague, who is now with the Bureau of Investigative Journalism; [David Leigh](#), the former Guardian and Observer journalist; [Heather Brooke](#), a freedom of information

campaigner; and [Andrew O'Hagan](#), who had been commissioned to ghost Assange's autobiography.

All of them have declined to cooperate with the FBI. In an article for [Rolling Stone](#) last year, Ball said that he had first been approached in 2021 and subjected to pressure, including the threat of being prosecuted himself.

O'Hagan said that although he had his differences with Assange, he would happily go to jail rather than assist the FBI. "I would only add that the attempt to punish Assange for exposing the truth is an attack on journalism itself. I notice that none of those mainstream collaborators who published his material - the New York Times, the Guardian, and Der Spiegel - are being pursued, which demonstrates that a generational bias against internet-based journalism is at the heart of the case ... If Julian goes to the US, Britain will have failed to protect one of the first principles of democracy."

Editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks Kristinn Hrafnsson has commented on what Assange's prosecution and possible extradition means for the future of press freedoms.

"It cannot be underestimated, the effect that it will have," he said. "If an Australian citizen publishing in Europe can face prison time in the United States, that means no journalists anywhere are safe in the future."

As for Assange's native Australia, its parliament has just voted to issue formal request that charges against Julian Assange be dropped. The motion adopted by parliament [emphasized](#) "the importance of the UK and USA bringing the matter to a close so that Mr. Assange can return home to his family in Australia."

The clock is ticking! My friend [@MearsheimerJ](#) on [#FreeAssange](#) [#FreeAssangeNOW](#) [#FreeAssange2024](#)

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— Judge Napolitano (@Judgenap) [February 17, 2024](#)

Days ago, Amnesty International also [renewed its call](#) to drop the charges against Assange.

"The risk to publishers and investigative journalists around the world hangs in the balance. Should Julian Assange be sent to the U.S. and prosecuted there, global media freedoms will be on trial, too," a statement said.

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