

# Defend Journalist Julian Assange from Extradition to the United States

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*On Wednesday Wikileaks editor **Julian Assange** appeared at a Westminster court for his final case management hearing before his extradition hearing which begins on 24 February.*

The U.S. government will present its case arguing for Assange's extradition to face 17 charges under the Espionage Act and one charge of computer crime which could carry a sentence, if convicted, of 175 years.

At the extradition hearing Assange's London lawyer, [Jennifer Robinson](#), will argue that the United States 'breached due process' due its surveillance operation of the Wikileaks editor while sheltering in the Ecuadorian embassy. This secret surveillance operation was carried out by a Spanish company that sent the footage to U.S. intelligence services,. It filmed Assange talking to his lawyers, family and friends in the embassy and is the subject of an investigation in Spain.

**Joseph Farrell**, a spokesman for Wikileaks, stated that this breach of due process raises huge doubts as to whether Julian Assange will receive a fair trial next week:

"You had a security company working for the Ecuadorian Embassy that was recording all of his meetings, including his meetings with his doctors and his lawyers, including strategic legal discussions, so that completely destroys any element of client/attorney privilege."

## International support from Julian Assange mounts

Assange's case has received support from 2 Australian MPs who visited the Wikileaks publisher at Belmarsh maximum security prison on Tuesday. They called on the UK government to block his extradition to the U.S.

Australian MP [Andrew Wilke](#) said on twitter:

"In London we met with UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to discuss Julian Assange. Nils left us in no doubt that Assange is showing the effects of psychophysical torture and feels betrayed by the justice system in the UK, the USA & Aus."

Further pressure is being brought to bear by the publication on 17 February of a letter in the Lancet representing 117 doctors from 18 countries.

They note that their first 2 letters to the UK government on the treatment of Assange had

been ignored. The letter declares:

“We condemn the torture of Assange. We condemn the denial of his fundamental right to appropriate health care. We condemn the climate of fear surrounding the provision of health care to him. We condemn the violations of his right to doctor-patient confidentiality. Politics cannot be allowed to interfere with the right to health and the practice of medicine.”

The 117 doctors conclude their letter with a warning to the UK government and a call for solidarity and support for Julian Assange:

“Should Assange die in a UK prison, as the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture has warned, he will effectively have been tortured to death. Much of that torture will have taken place in a prison medical ward, on doctors’ watch. The medical profession cannot afford to stand silently by, on the wrong side of torture and the wrong side of history, while such a travesty unfolds.

In the interests of defending medical ethics, medical authority, and the human right to health, and taking a stand against torture, together we can challenge and raise awareness of the abuses detailed in our letters. Our appeals are simple: we are calling upon governments to end the torture of Assange and ensure his access to the best available health care before it is too late. Our request to others is this: please join us.”

### **EU Human Rights Commissioner declares Assange should not be extradited**

Further pressure has been brought to bear on the UK government on Thursday by **the unprecedented intervention of [Dunja Mijatović](#), who is the** Council of Europe’s Human Rights Commissioner. She released a statement opposing Assange’s extradition to the United States due to the, “potential impact on press freedom and concerns about ill-treatment.”

The Human Rights Commissioner declared that:

“Julian Assange’s potential extradition has human rights implications that reach far beyond his individual case. The indictment raises important questions about the protection of those that publish classified information in the public interest, including those that expose human rights violations. The broad and vague nature of the allegations against Julian Assange, and of the offences listed in the indictment, are troubling as many of them concern activities at the core of investigative journalism in Europe and beyond. Consequently, allowing Julian Assange’s extradition on this basis would have a chilling effect on media freedom, and could ultimately hamper the press in performing its task as purveyor of information and public watchdog in democratic societies.”

She went on to acknowledge the danger that Assange may suffer torture at the hands of U.S. authorities:

“Furthermore, any extradition to a situation in which the person involved would be at real risk of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment would be contrary to Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment has made clear that he considers that both the detention

conditions in the United States and the sentence likely to be imposed on Julian Assange present such a real risk.

She concludes with the damning conclusion, remember this is coming from the EU a close American ally, that Assange should not be extradited to the United States:

“In view of both the press freedom implications and the serious concerns over the treatment Julian Assange would be subjected to in the United States, my assessment as Commissioner for Human Rights is that he should not be extradited.”

### **UK Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell visits Julian Assange and calls for his release**

On a day of dramatic interventions the [Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell](#) visited Julian Assange at Belmarsh maximum security prison. He has battled for several weeks to be allowed to visit the Wikileaks publisher. McDonnell has recently spoken at public rallies calling for Assange’s release.

After visiting Julian Assange the Shadow Chancellor said:

“We are hoping that in court he is able to defeat the extradition bid. We don’t believe that extradition should be used for political purposes, and all the evidence - even the recent revelations with regard to Trump engagement - demonstrates that this is a political trial and we are hoping that the courts will see it that way.”

“If this extradition takes place it will damage the democratic standing of our own country as well as America. We have a long standing tradition in this country of standing up for whistle blowers, journalists ... if this extradition takes place I think it will damage our reputation.”

Despite the obstacles facing the Wikileaks editor John McDonnell remained optimistic that Assange’s extradition may not go ahead:

“I am hoping that combination of cross-party support, what has happened in the media, the exposes that have taken place in recent weeks, will ensure that we have a climate of opinion in this country that prevents this extradition taking place.”

The UK historian/journalist Mark Curtis, who has been a consistent critic of US and UK foreign policy in the Middle East, has noted the conspiracy of silence by the UK media over the British government’s ‘criminal’ handling of Assange’s case:

“It’s a big deal when a UN special rapporteur [Professor Nils Melzer] says UK officials should be investigated for possible “criminal conduct” over torture of Julian Assange. Proof of its importance that it hasn’t been mentioned in any UK mainstream media report, as far as I can see.”

The 2003 extradition treaty between the UK and US forbids extradition on the grounds of

political offences. Yet this award winning journalist is being extradited, for exposing American war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan and government corruption around the world.

Take solidarity action to stop the extradition of Julian Assange.

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