

Defending Julian Assange; Defending the Truth

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On 11 April 2019, WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange was dragged from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London by UK police and arrested for breaching a bail condition. See [‘Arrest update – SW1’](#). Upon arrival at a London police station, Julian was ‘further arrested’ on behalf of the United States government to satisfy an extradition warrant under Section 73 of the UK Extradition Act. See [‘UPDATE: Arrest of Julian Assange’](#).

Following a brief court hearing in which the extraordinary prejudice of the district judge was on clear display – see [‘Chelsea and Julian Are in Jail. History Trembles’](#)– Julian is now imprisoned in south London’s maximum security Belmarsh Prison. He will appear in custody at Westminster Magistrates’ Court for a preliminary extradition hearing on 2 May and the US must produce its case for requesting Julian’s extradition from the UK by 12 June but, as Nicholas Weaver reports, Julian could be in UK custody for years as the extradition is contested in court. See [‘The Wikileaks Case Is Just Beginning’](#).

Prior to his arrest, Julian had been living in the Ecuadorian Embassy since 2012, having been granted citizenship of Ecuador and asylum by that country because many people were well aware of the risk he faced if he was tried in a kangaroo court in the United States. This asylum, to which Julian was entitled under long-standing provisions of international law, had been granted by previous Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, who clearly understood this law (and the moral principles on which it is based).

As a result of his recent arrest however, Julian is under threat of extradition to the United States so that he can face criminal prosecution/persecution – see the [US indictment of Julian Assange](#) or [‘Read the Julian Assange indictment’](#)– for his role in exposing the truth about US war crimes in Afghanistan (the Afghan War Diary) and Iraq (the Iraq War Logs), as did *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, by publishing leaked evidence of these crimes – including the [‘Collateral Murder’](#) video – as well as publishing evidence of widespread government corruption on the [WikiLeaks](#) website. It was this threat of persecution by US authorities that led Julian to seek asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in the first place.

However, since the election in Ecuador on 24 May 2017 of the criminal and cowardly president Lenín Moreno, Julian’s asylum has been under threat and the conditions of his stay in the Embassy have rapidly deteriorated. This is because Moreno has been anxious to divert public attention from the spotlight of corruption currently shining directly on him – see [‘Ecuador National Assembly to Start Corruption Probe of Moreno’](#)– and to secure the loans offered as bribes by US officials while capitulating to US government pressure to illegally terminate Julian’s political asylum. See [‘Ecuador Bowed to US Pressure, Violated Law – Assange’s Associate’](#) and [‘WikiLeaks Founder Julian Assange Arrested, Activists Rally to Stop US Extradition’](#).

Of course, the criminal and cowardly nature of Moreno's action is highlighted by the fact that the decision of the Ecuadorian government to terminate Julian's asylum was done in violation of article 79 of Ecuador's constitution which forbids extradition of its own citizens. See ['Republic of Ecuador Constitution of 2008'](#). As Moreno's predecessor, Rafael Correa noted simply in one Facebook post: 'Moreno is a corrupt man'. See ['Facebook Removes Page of Ecuador's Former President on Same Day as Assange's Arrest'](#).

Unfortunately, as further evidence of its function as an elite agent, rather than facilitating free speech, Facebook promptly 'unpublished' Correa's Facebook page. Clearly, Moreno's corruption is not a subject that Facebook wants advertised. See ['Facebook Removes Page of Ecuador's Former President on Same Day as Assange's Arrest'](#). Still, it should be pointed out, Twitter's function as an elite agent is no different. See ['Twitter Restricts Account of Julian Assange's Mother'](#).

Naturally enough, despite elite efforts to control the narrative, many people and organizations around the world have been outraged at the treatment of Julian (as well as other truthful journalists and whistleblowers such as Chelsea Manning, who has recently been imprisoned yet again, and Edward Snowden) who act courageously on the basis that the public has a right to know about the criminality of their governments as well as to know the truth generally.

As long ago as 5 February 2016, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at the United Nations issued a statement in which they 'called on the Swedish and British authorities to end Mr. Assange's deprivation of liberty, respect his physical integrity and freedom of movement, and afford him the right to compensation' noting that its opinions are 'legally-binding to the extent that they are based on binding international human rights law, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)'. See ['Julian Assange arbitrarily detained by Sweden and the UK, UN expert panel finds'](#).

Moreover, in recent days, UN officials have spoken openly of their serious concern if Julian's asylum was illegally revoked. See ['UN expert on privacy plans to visit Julian Assange'](#) and ['Two UN Rapporteurs Are Concerned About Julian Assange's Situation'](#).

And just recently, on 11 April 2019, the American Civil Liberties Union issued its response to Julian's arrest, noting that 'Criminally prosecuting a publisher for the publication of truthful information would be a first in American history, and unconstitutional.' The report added that 'Any prosecution by the United States of Mr. Assange for Wikileaks' publishing operations would be unprecedented and unconstitutional, and would open the door to criminal investigations of other news organizations. Moreover, prosecuting a foreign publisher for violating U.S. secrecy laws would set an especially dangerous precedent for U.S. journalists, who routinely violate foreign secrecy laws to deliver information vital to the public's interest.' See ['ACLU Comment on Julian Assange Arrest'](#).

So once extradited, would Julian have any chance of defending himself with the truth? As US attorney Bill Simpich explains, Julian will be prevented from presenting the essential elements of his defense because 'The [US] government doesn't want a fair fight. In a fair fight, the government will lose.' See ['The Julian Assange Case: Revealing War Crimes Is Not a Crime'](#).

More bluntly, Jonathan Turley points out:

'[T]he Justice Department is likely to move aggressively to strip Assange of his core defenses. Through what is called a motion in limine, the government will ask the court to declare that the disclosure of intelligence controversies is immaterial. This would leave Assange with only the ability to challenge whether he helped with passwords and little or no opportunity to present evidence of his motivations or the threat to privacy.

'The key to prosecuting Assange has always been to punish him without again embarrassing the powerful figures made mockeries by his disclosures. That means to keep him from discussing how the U.S. government concealed attacks and huge civilian losses, the type of disclosures that were made in the famous Pentagon Papers case. He cannot discuss how Democratic and Republican members either were complicit or incompetent in their oversight. He cannot discuss how the public was lied to about the program.' See ['Julian Assange Will Be Punished for Embarrassing the DC Establishment'](#).

Hence, while the Ecuadorian, British and US governments are flagrantly violating the law in persecuting Julian, it is being left to individuals and civil society organizations to defend him and many are mobilizing to do so already.

As a result, people have signed petitions – see ['Don't extradite Assange!'](#) and ['Block Extradition & Prosecution of Julian Assange for First Amendment-Protected Journalism'](#) – some have participated in demonstrations at UK embassies and consulates around the world – see, for example, ['Protesters Call on UK to #FreeAssange Outside British Embassy in DC'](#) – and others have engaged in other acts of solidarity as suggested, for example, by Julian's mother Christine or on the website ['Defend WikiLeaks'](#) and in this article: ['Julian Assange Arrested, Take Action Now'](#). =

Given the importance of defending our access to accurate information about our world, rather than the propaganda marketed as 'news' by the corporate media, it is worth reflecting on how best we can do this and, in doing so, defend people like Julian and Chelsea (who play such a vital role in giving us access to the truth in particular contexts) at the same time.

Hence, because of my own longstanding interest in developing thoughtfully-designed nonviolent strategies in our struggle to make our world one of peace, justice and ecological sustainability, let me suggest a strategic way forward that will honor the courage of Julian and Chelsea by maximizing the impact of their truth-telling on the longer-term struggles just mentioned while also taking separate action to provide some additional pressure to assist them in the short and medium terms.

In order to design this strategy well, let us first analyze the issue of why those who tell the truth are persecuted. If we do not understand, precisely, why this happens, we cannot respond powerfully.

Accurate Strategic Analysis Depends on Knowing the Truth

If we are to understand, accurately, the context and structural dimensions of a conflict (that is, the 'big picture' in which it is contained) so that we can identify and analyze the underlying drivers of the conflict in order to develop a coherent strategy to address these drivers, then the very first prerequisite is that we have truthful information. Without this truthful information, activists have zero prospect of accurately understanding and analyzing what is happening in the world (such as in relation to war and the climate catastrophe, for

example).

Because the global elite is highly aware of the importance of the truth, it goes to enormous effort to make it difficult, if not impossible, to access the truth, particularly in certain critical contexts. And there are some classic historical examples, among many others, where not knowing the truth has allowed elites to inflict monumental atrocities in our name while crippling efforts to strategically mobilize opposition to these atrocities.

The most obvious examples of this phenomenon include 'false flag' attacks such as those conducted by US authorities and their allies on 9/11 as the prelude to launching their 'war on terror' which has caused immeasurable damage to, if not virtually destroyed, entire countries across west Asia and north Africa. If the truth about those behind the 9/11 attacks had been immediately available, rather than still 'dribbling out' nearly 20 years later, then it would have been far easier to mobilize resistance to the US-led wars on other countries and to campaign, strategically, for the profound changes needed to ensure that our world is spared the scourge of such atrocities in future. To access the definitive account of the overwhelming evidence in relation to 9/11 as a false flag attack, see [9/11 Unmasked: An International Review Panel Investigation](#) which is reviewed in ['The Fakest Fake News: The U.S. Government's 9/11 Conspiracy Theory'](#). For a long but incomplete list of false flag attacks, see ['The Ever-Growing List of ADMITTED False Flag Attacks'](#).

So if we ask the question 'Who played the primary role in deceiving us about 9/11 and molding the desired public response?', the answer is that it was some key government, corporate, military and bureaucratic spokespeople and, particularly, the corporate media projecting the words of these official spokespeople far and wide. But if we ask the question 'Who was controlling these spokespeople and the corporate media?' the answer is 'the global elite'.

This is because a primary function of the global elite, which it has long understood, is to create (using individuals employed within its think tanks as well as compliant academics) and maintain (through education systems, the entertainment industry and the corporate media) the dominant narrative in society so that the information available to the public is the information that the elite needs to shape public perception in favor of elite interests, such as perpetual war and chronic over-consumption, which ensure perpetuation of elite power, profit and privilege.

Hence, as you can see, people like Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning and organizations like [WikiLeaks](#) represent a fundamental threat to elite power, profit and privilege precisely because their truth-telling functionally undermines the elite narrative, for example, that our 'enemy' is a bunch of terrorists somewhere rather than the global elite itself.

While the false flag examples offered above highlight how suppression of the truth disempowers activists and populations thus helping to minimize any effective mobilization in response, there are also a great many examples where the truth was critical to informing and helping to mobilize activists to resist injustice, in one form or another. For example, Kevin Zeese superbly illustrates the crucial importance of WikiLeaks in facilitating awareness of the truth during the uprisings in 2011 across north Africa and west Asia. See ['Julian Assange: At the Forefront of 21st Century Journalism'](#).

In essence then, it is individuals like Julian and Chelsea, rather than the sycophantic editors, reporters and journalists working for the corporate media, who give us the information we

need to know so that we can better understand how our dysfunctional and violent world works and campaign effectively to change it.

And so they are enemies of the elite who must be silenced and discredited, legally or otherwise.

If you would like to read other accounts by individuals who astutely warn us of the deeper implications of what is happening to Julian, see the recent articles by Chris Hedges [‘The Martyrdom of Julian Assange’](#) and John Pilger [‘The Assange Arrest Is a Warning from History’](#).

So what do we do?

Well, I believe we honor individuals like Julian and Chelsea by using the truths they reveal to us to develop and implement thoughtfully-designed nonviolent strategies to make our world one of peace, justice and ecological sustainability. This is why they risk paying (and are now paying) such a high personal price to get us the truth that must inform these struggles. But we can also assist courageous individuals like Julian and Chelsea in the short-term too. So let me also add to the suggestions made by others mentioned above.

If we are to make the most use of the truth that Julian and Chelsea have risked (and paid) so much to get to us, then we must campaign strategically. By doing this, as I just mentioned, we truly honor their efforts and sacrifice. So, for example, if you want to campaign to end the elite’s wars and destruction of our climate from which it profits so enormously, then consider doing it strategically. See [Nonviolent Campaign Strategy](#). This site identifies, among other key elements of strategy, the two strategic aims and the basic list of strategic goals necessary to achieve these outcomes. See [‘Campaign Strategic Aims’](#).

Irrespective of whether or not you are keen on campaigning in this way, there is a fifteen-year strategy for tackling all elements of our environmental crisis in [‘The Flame Tree Project to Save Life on Earth’](#).

If you would like to tackle the problem at its core, consider making [‘My Promise to Children’](#) so that your children grow up with the conscience and courage of Julian and Chelsea. Unfortunately, individuals of their conscience and courage are incredibly rare in our world: not a powerful place to start in tackling a global elite that is utterly insane.

‘Insane?’ you might ask. Remember this: the global elite and many of its political, corporate, bureaucratic, military and academic agents, spend their time planning and implementing strategies to kill people (using military violence and economic exploitation) to make a profit. Do you really believe that this is something that a sane person would spend their time doing? I know you have been inundated with propaganda throughout your life to make you accept (or ignore) the violence in our world without question but pause and ponder it now: is it really sane? Are we not capable, as a species, of organizing our world to achieve peace, justice and ecological sustainability? See [‘The Global Elite is Insane Revisited’](#) with a lot more detail in [‘Why Violence?’](#) and [‘Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice’](#).

Moreover, individuals who are not incredibly psychologically damaged do not manipulate elite institutions – such as the legal system: see [‘The Rule of Law: Unjust and Violent’](#) – to persecute powerful individuals like Julian and Chelsea. The conscience and courage of Julian and Chelsea are readily recognized by those who are not psychologically damaged: they are

qualities of exceptional individuals whom we should honor.

If you would like to join the worldwide movement to end all violence, you are welcome to sign the online pledge of [‘The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’](#).

But we do not need to confine our acts of solidarity with Julian and Chelsea to those regarding strategies for profound change or the others mentioned above either. If you want to act powerfully in their support, consider the following five options as well and do as many as you can:

1. Boycott *The Guardian* and *The New York Times* (because they were two of the original outlets that published material sourced from WikiLeaks but now hypocritically engage in the persecution of Julian and Chelsea). And suggest to others that they also boycott these media outlets.
2. Boycott all media outlets (anywhere in the world) that advocate or support the arrest, trial and/or imprisonment of Julian and/or Chelsea. And suggest to others that they boycott these media outlets too. If you want the truth about our world, get it from news outlets like the one you are reading now.
3. Boycott Facebook. And suggest to others that they boycott this medium too.
4. Boycott Twitter. And suggest to others that they boycott this medium too.
5. Write letters of solidarity to Julian and Chelsea. Tell them what you are doing to make best use of the truths they have revealed.

Given elite control of all political, economic, commercial, legal, social and media institutions of any consequence in our world, it will not be easy to liberate Julian (and, perhaps, even Chelsea) in the short term. UK and US elites may even conspire to secretly put Julian on a rendition flight to the US or simply be content with a protracted legal struggle which distracts many of us from the issues that Julian and Chelsea so courageously put in the spotlight.

For that reason, while we struggle to liberate them we can also struggle to liberate the vast number of other people who suffer the elite’s military violence and economic exploitation so that the efforts of Julian and Chelsea are not in vain.

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