

# IADL Calls on UK Court to Grant Bail to Julian Assange, Ill and Vulnerable to COVID-19

By [IADL](#)

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*The International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL) is a non-governmental organization with consultative status in ECOSOC and UNESCO. Founded in 1946 to promote the goals of the United Nations Charter, IADL and its affiliated organizations throughout the world have consistently fought to uphold international law, promote human rights and address threats to international peace and security. From its inception, IADL members have protested racism, colonialism, and economic and political injustice wherever they occur.*

IADL is extremely alarmed at the psychological torture of **Julian Assange** and the serious threats to his health as a result of his continued incarceration.

After WikiLeaks published damning evidence of the United States' commission of war crimes in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo prison, the U.S. government mounted a campaign to discredit and vilify Julian Assange. It worked with the Swedish and UK governments to detain Assange on trumped-up charges of sexual assault with the likely goal of extraditing him to the United States. Assange was granted asylum in the Ecuadoran embassy in London where he remained for 7 years until a US-friendly government came to power in Ecuador, withdrew his asylum and turned him over to the UK.

While Assange was living in the London embassy, he developed health conditions that required medical treatment. The UK government refused to allow him to go to a hospital without being arrested. Assange's health severely deteriorated. Moreover, on May 31, 2019, UN Special Rapporteur **Nils Melzer** declared that Assange exhibited signs of prolonged exposure to psychological torture.

After Assange was arrested by the UK, he was convicted of a bail offense and sentenced to one year in jail. That charge was a minor offense but his unconscionable sentence gave the United States time to go after him. The U.S. government indicted him under the Espionage Act and asked the UK to extradite him to the U.S. for trial on the indictment. He faces 175 years in prison if convicted.

Assange's extradition hearing in the UK will continue on September 7. Meanwhile, he remains confined at Belmarsh Prison in London. Assange spends 23 hours a day in solitary confinement, which amounts torture. During the other hour, Assange is confined in a small area with 40 inmates. The proximity to so many people, combined with his fragile health conditions, make Assange particularly vulnerable to contracting COVID-19.

Several Australian MPs, journalists and human rights advocates called on the government of Australia, of which Assange is a national, to intervene and request that Assange be granted

bail, citing COVID-19. They wrote,

“The extradition hearings have been disrupted and delayed, leaving Mr. Assange unable to have his case heard until September 2020 at the earliest, while deaths within the UK prison populations and illness amongst judicial and penal staff cohorts continue to rise.”

Assange was too ill to attend his May 4 hearing, even by videoconference. In an open letter to *The Lancet*, 216 physicians and psychologists from 33 countries accused the UK and U.S. governments of exacerbating the psychological torture of Assange. Citing the Convention Against Torture, the signatories warned that UK officials could be held complicit and liable for their perpetration of, or silent acquiescence and consent to, Assange’s torture.

IADL strongly opposes the continued life-threatening incarceration of Julian Assange who only remains convicted of a bail offense. IADL calls on the UK court to grant bail forthwith to Julian Assange.

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