

Julian Assange Has Formally Requested a Pardon from President Donald Trump

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People from across the political spectrum have called on President Trump to pardon the WikiLeaks founder, citing the importance of the freedom to publish.

Assange's fiancé Stella Morris, the mother of his two young children, has previously called for a pardon — but a formal request was not filed with the White House until this week.

Assange is imprisoned in the United Kingdom pending a decision about his extradition to the United States where he faces charges under the Espionage Act for his publication of the Iraq and Afghan War Logs. If convicted he could face a maximum sentence of 175 years for the “crime” of publishing material that the US government did not want the population to know.

In 2018, President Trump's attorneys [quietly made a case in defense of WikiLeaks](#) throughout legal filings responding to a lawsuit filed by Democrat Party donors who alleged that the campaign and former advisor Roger Stone conspired with Russians to publish the leaked Democratic National Committee emails.

Buried within hundreds of pages of case filings, in a motion filed in October 2018, Trump lawyer Michael A. Carvin argued that under section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (47 U.S.C. § 230), “a website that provides a forum where ‘third parties can post information’ is not liable for the third party's posted information.”

“That is so even when even when the website performs ‘editorial functions’ ‘such as deciding whether to publish,’” the filing contends. “Since WikiLeaks provided a forum for a third party (the unnamed ‘Russian actors’) to publish content developed by that third party (the hacked emails), it cannot be held liable for the publication.”

This defense holds true for the war log releases that Assange has been charged for publishing.

“In addition, the First Amendment generally denies the government power to punish truthful speech,” Carvin wrote. He added that privacy cannot justify these violations of core First Amendment norms. The filing then refers to the 1989 case of *Florida Star v. B.J.F.*, in which it was determined that “punishing truthful publication in the name of privacy” is an “extraordinary measure.”

The formal pardon request comes on the heels of a [viral claim from a Trump ally](#) that the president would be pardoning the publisher. While he ended up retracting his statement,

claiming he had faulty sources, it was clear that it was a move that people from both sides of the political spectrum support. The tweet gained over 75,000 “likes” on Twitter in about an hour, before being retracted.

National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden weighed in on the news saying that “I very much hope this is true. The case against Assange is based on a legal theory that would criminalize the work of every journalist, both at home and abroad.”

Snowden has previously lobbied for a pardon for Assange, even before one for himself.

“Mr. President, if you grant only one act of clemency during your time in office, please: free Julian Assange. You alone can save his life,” Snowden tweeted earlier this month.

Mr. President, if you grant only one act of clemency during your time in office, please: free Julian Assange. You alone can save his life. [@realDonaldTrump](#)

— Edward Snowden (@Snowden) [December 3, 2020](#)

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Cassandra Fairbanks is a former leftist who came out in support of Donald Trump in 2016. She has been published in the International Business Times, RT, Sputnik, The Independent and countless other publications.

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