

# 'Julian Assange Is Free': WikiLeaks Founder Strikes Plea Deal with US

"We thank all who stood by us, fought for us, and remained utterly committed in the fight for his freedom," said WikiLeaks. "Julian's freedom is our freedom."

By [Common Dreams](#)

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*WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on Monday [reached](#) a deal with the U.S. government, agreeing to plead guilty to one felony related to the disclosure of national security information in exchange for his release from Belmarsh Prison in the United Kingdom.*

A related [document](#) was filed in federal court in the Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. commonwealth. Under the plea agreement, which must still be approved by a judge, the Department of Justice (DOJ) will seek a 62-month sentence, equal to the time that the 52-year-old Australian has served in the U.K. prison while [battling](#) his extradition to the United States.

Assange [faced](#) the risk of spending the rest of his life in U.S. prison if convicted of Espionage Act and Computer Fraud and Abuse Act charges for publishing classified material including the "[Collateral Murder](#)" video and the [Afghan](#) and [Iraq war logs](#). Before Belmarsh, he spent seven years in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London with asylum protections.

"Julian Assange is free," WikiLeaks [declared](#) on the social media platform X, confirming that he left Belmarsh Monday "after having spent 1,901 days there," locked in a small cell for 23 hours a day.

Julian is free!!!!

Words cannot express our immense gratitude to YOU- yes YOU, who have all mobilised for years and years to make this come true. THANK YOU. THANK YOU. THANK YOU.

Follow [@WikiLeaks](#) for more info soon...[pic.twitter.com/gW4UWCKP44](https://pic.twitter.com/gW4UWCKP44)

— Stella Assange #FreeAssangeNOW (@Stella\_Assange) [June 25, 2024](#)

“He was granted bail by the High Court in London and was released at Stanstead Airport during the afternoon, where he boarded a plane and departed the U.K.,” WikiLeaks said. “This is the result of a global campaign that spanned grassroots organizers, press freedom campaigners, legislators, and leaders from across the political spectrum, all the way to the United Nations.”

“He will soon reunite with his wife Stella Assange, and their children, who have only known their father from behind bars,” the group continued. “WikiLeaks published groundbreaking stories of government corruption and human rights abuses, holding the powerful accountable for their actions. As editor-in-chief, Julian paid severely for these principles, and for the people’s right to know. As he returns to Australia, we thank all who stood by us, fought for us, and remained utterly committed in the fight for his freedom. Julian’s freedom is our freedom.”

The news of Assange’s release was celebrated by people around the world, who also blasted the U.S. for continuing to pursue charges against him and the U.K. for going along with it.

“Takeaway from the 12 years of Assange persecution: We need a world where independent journalists work in freedom and top war criminals go to prison—not the other way around,” the progressive advocacy group and longtime Assange supporter RootsAction [said](#) on social media.

BREAKING: [@TheJusticeDept](#) and Julian Assange have come to a plea deal in the long-running case that threatens press freedom.

Our statement at [@FreedomofPress](#): <https://t.co/YMxrajiLoI>

— Freedom of the Press (@FreedomofPress) [June 25, 2024](#)

Seth Stern, advocacy director at the Freedom of the Press Foundation, [said](#) that

“it’s good news that the DOJ is putting an end to this embarrassing saga. But it’s alarming that the Biden administration felt the need to extract a guilty plea for the purported crime of obtaining and publishing government secrets.”

“That’s what investigative journalists do every day,” Stern noted. “The plea deal won’t have the precedential effect of a court ruling, but it will still hang over the heads of national security reporters for years to come. The deal doesn’t add any more prison time or punishment for Assange. It’s purely symbolic.”

“The administration could’ve easily just dropped the case but chose to instead legitimize the criminalization of routine journalistic conduct and encourage future administrations to follow suit,” he added. “And they made that choice knowing that [former U.S. President] Donald Trump would love nothing more than to find a way to

throw journalists in jail.”

JULIAN ASSANGE IS FREE [pic.twitter.com/z63hl2WnuV](https://pic.twitter.com/z63hl2WnuV)

— Free Assange - #FreeAssange (@FreeAssangeNews) [June 24, 2024](#)

Leftist Colombian President Gustavo Petro said in a statement:

“I congratulate Julian Assange on his freedom. Assange’s eternal imprisonment and torture was an attack on press freedom on a global scale. Denouncing the massacre of civilians in Iraq by the U.S. war machine was his ‘crime’; now the massacre is repeated in [Gaza](#) I invite Julian and his wife Stella to visit Colombia and let’s take action for true freedom.”

Australian Greens leader Adam Bandt, who represents Melbourne in Parliament, [said](#) on social media that

“Julian Assange will finally be free. While great news, this has been over a decade of his life wasted by U.S. overreach.”

“Journalism is not a crime,” Bandt added. “Pursuing Assange was anti-democratic, anti-press freedom, and the charges should have been dropped.”

After more than five years in the maximum-security Belmarsh Prison in the UK, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange reached a plea deal with the U.S. government. The deal allows for his release and return to his home country of Australia after a formal sentencing at a US court in the... [pic.twitter.com/5S3xdbZnG2](https://pic.twitter.com/5S3xdbZnG2)

— CODEPINK (@codepink) [June 25, 2024](#)

The women-led peace group CodePink said in a statement:

Without Julian Assange’s critical journalism, the world would know a lot less about war crimes committed by the United States and its allies. He is the reason so many anti-war organizations like ours have the proof we need to fight the war machine in the belly of the beast. CodePink celebrates Julian’s release and commends his brave journalism.

One of the most horrific videos published by WikiLeaks was called “Collateral Murder,” footage of the U.S. military opening fire on a group of unarmed civilians—including *Reuters* journalists—in Baghdad. While Julian has been in captivity for the past 14 years, the war criminals that destroyed Iraq walked free. Many are still in government positions today or living off the profits of weapons contracts.

While Julian pleads guilty to espionage—we uphold him as a giant of journalistic integrity.

Vahid Razavi, founder of Ethics in Tech and host of multiple NSA Comedy Nights focusing on government mass surveillance, told *Common Dreams* that

“they took a hero and turned him into a criminal.”

“Meanwhile, all of the war criminals in the files exposed by WikiLeaks via Chelsea Manning are free and never faced any punishment or even their day in court,” he added. “You can kill journalists with impunity, just like [Israel](#) is doing right now in Gaza.”

Former United Nations human rights official Craig Mokhiber, who [resigned](#) from his job last year over the world body’s refusal to prevent Israel’s slaughter of Palestinian civilians in Gaza, [said](#) on social media that “political prisoner Julian Assange, persecuted for years for the crime of journalism, simply for telling the truth about U.S. war crimes, is free.”

Mokhiber hailed what he called “a moment of light in an age of darkness.”

Julian Assange boarding an airplane. It's an image I never thought I would see—this year or next year or the year after. But because of the work of many advocates, campaigners, journalists, & others, we forced an outcome that avoided a much more dangerous precedent for journalism  
[pic.twitter.com/Ht4zBHs1tV](https://pic.twitter.com/Ht4zBHs1tV)

— Kevin Gosztola (@kgosztola) [June 25, 2024](#)

British journalist Afshin Rattansi said,

“Let no one think that any of us will ever forget what the British state did to the most famous journalist of his generation.”

“They tortured him—according to the United Nations special rapporteur on torture—at the behest of the United States,” Rattansi noted.

Andrew Kennis, a professor of journalism and social media at Rutgers University, told *Common Dreams* that

“Julian Assange is nothing less than the [Daniel Ellsberg](#) of our time.”

“His journalism revealed more war crimes by the U.S. than any other publisher in the world, and far more extensively than what Ellsberg was able to pull off with a photocopy machine,” he added. “But as opposed to receiving a deserved pardon... the persecution of Assange has been indicative of the guiding principle of U.S. foreign policy these days: Prosecute the whistleblowers exposing war crimes while funding Israeli war criminals in an ongoing attempt at genocide against occupied [Palestine](#).”

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