

Julian Assange Is My Husband - His Extradition Is an Abomination

Julian must be freed before it's too late. His life depends on it. Your rights depend on it

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Last Friday, home secretary Priti Patel gave her approval for the UK to send my husband, Julian Assange, to the country that plotted his assassination.

Julian remains imprisoned in Belmarsh after more than three years at the behest of US prosecutors. He faces a prison sentence of up to 175 years for arguably the most celebrated publications in the history of journalism.

Patel’s decision to extradite Julian has sent shockwaves across the journalism community. The home secretary flouted calls from representatives of the Council of Europe, the OSCE, almost 2000 journalists and 300 doctors for the extradition to be halted.

When Julian calls around the children’s bed time, they talk over each other boisterously. The calls only last 10 minutes, so when the call ended abruptly the other night Max, who is three, asked tearfully if it was because he’d been naughty, I absentmindedly said it wasn’t his fault, but Mike Pompeo’s. Five-year-old Gabriel asked: “Who is Mike Pompeo?”

Mike Pompeo had been on my mind, because while the home secretary in this country was busy signing Julian’s extradition order, in Spain a High Court judge was summoning Pompeo for questioning regarding his role as director of the CIA in their reported plots to murder my husband.

While at the helm of the CIA, President Trump’s most loyal supporter reportedly tasked his agents with preparing “sketches” and “options” for the assassination of their father.

The citation for Pompeo to appear before a Spanish judge comes out of an investigation into illicit spying of Julian and his lawyers through a company registered in Spain. Spanish police

seized large amounts of electronic data, and insiders involved in carrying out the clandestine operations testified that they acted on instruction of the CIA. They had discussed abducting and poisoning Julian.

Gabriel was six months old at the time and had been a target too. One witness was instructed to obtain DNA swabs from a soiled nappy in order to establish that Julian was his father. Another admitted to planting hidden microphones under the fire extinguishers to tap legally privileged meetings between Julian and his lawyers.

The recordings of Julian's legal meetings in the Ecuadorian embassy in London were physically transported to handlers in the United States on a regular basis. A break-in at Julian's lawyers' office was caught on camera, and investigators discovered photographs of Julian's lawyer's legal papers taken inside the embassy. The operations targeting his lawyers read like they are taken from a Soviet playbook.

Across the pond, ever since the Nixon administration's attempted prosecution of the New York Times over the Pentagon Papers over half a century ago, constitutional lawyers had been warning that the 1917 Espionage Act would one day be abused to prosecute journalists.

It was President Obama's administration that enlivened the creeping misuse of the Espionage Act. More journalistic sources were charged under the Act than all previous administrations combined, including WikiLeaks source Chelsea Manning; CIA torture whistleblower John Kiriakou; and NSA spying whistleblower Edward Snowden.

Following massive public pressure Obama commuted Chelsea Manning's 35-year sentence. Obama declined to prosecute Julian for publishing Manning's leaks because of the implications for press freedom.

After the Obama administration's Espionage Act charging spree, it was just a matter of time before another administration expanded the interpretation of the Act even further.

That day came soon enough. Trump's administration broke new legal ground with the indictment of Julian for receiving, possessing, and publishing the Manning leaks. Meanwhile in Langley, Virginia, Pompeo tasked CIA assassination plans.

Priti Patel's decision comes amidst sweeping government reforms of an increasingly totalitarian bent – the plans to weaken the influence of the European Court of Human Rights and the decision to extradite Julian are the coup de grace.

The home secretary's proposed reforms to the UK's Official Secrets Act largely track the Trump-era indictment against Julian: publishers and their sources can be charged as criminal co-conspirators.

Julian's extradition case itself creates legal precedent. What has long been understood to be a bedrock principle of democracy, press freedom, will disappear in one fell swoop.

As it stands, no journalist is going to risk having what Julian is being subjected to happen to them. Julian must be freed before it's too late. His life depends on it. Your rights depend on it.

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