

“War on Dissent” Threatens Speech, Media and Academic Freedoms

By [Stephen Lendman](#)

Global Research, January 26, 2020

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [Media Disinformation](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

Censorship is the new normal in America and the West, wanting the message controlled, targeting what conflicts with it for elimination, notably on major geopolitical issues.

Digital democracy is the last frontier of free and open expression.

It's threatened by social media, Google, and other tech giants — complicit in a campaign against content conflicting with the official narrative.

Media scholar **Robert McChesney** earlier said without digital democracy, “the Internet would look like cable TV...a handful of massive companies (controlling) content” — deciding what's permitted online and what's suppressed.

Without free expression rights, all others are threatened — where things are headed in US and other Western societies.

Fundamental rights are eroding, at risk of disappearing altogether on the phony pretext of protecting national security at a time when alleged foreign threats to the West are invented, not real.

Pompeo earlier claimed “Julian Assange has no First Amendment freedoms (sic)...He's not a US citizen.”

Despite no evidence suggesting it, Pompeo called Assange “a non-state hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors like Russia (sic),” adding:

“We have to recognize that we can no longer allow Assange and his colleagues the latitude to use free speech values against us (sic).”

“To give (him and others) space to crush us with misappropriated secrets is a perversion of what our great Constitution stands for (sic). It ends now.”

Pompeo declared war on speech, media, and academic freedoms — supported by Trump, falsely calling Assange an “enemy of the people.”

Following his latest kangaroo court hearing in London on Thursday, pertaining to the Trump regime's unjustifiable extradition request, the UK complicit in its war on free expression, WikiLeaks editor-in-chief **Kristinn Hrafnsson** said the following:

“We have now learned from submissions and affidavits presented by the United States to this court that they do not consider foreign nationals to have a First Amendment protection,” adding:

“Now let that sink in for a second. At the same time that the US government is chasing journalists all over the world, they claim they have extra-territorial reach.”

“They have decided that all foreign journalists which include many of you here, have no protection under the First Amendment of the United States.”

“So that goes to show the gravity of this case. This is not about Julian Assange. It’s about press freedom.”

Denying Assange the universal right of free expression endangers all journalists and everyone else. His case is precedent-setting.

If extradited to the US, convicted of the “crime” of truth-telling journalism and imprisoned, it’ll have far-reaching consequences, all truth-telling journalists potentially threatened the same way.

Fundamental rule of law principles are universal, in place to protect everyone from abuses of power.

Dark forces in the US and other Western societies want views conflicting with official ones silenced.

In the US, earlier Supreme Court rulings upholding First Amendment rights are ignored, notably **Justice William Brennan**’s majority opinion in Texas v. Johnson (1989), saying:

“(I)f there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea offensive or disagreeable.”

Justice Thurgood Marshall once said:

“(A)bove all else, the First Amendment means that government has no power to restrict expression because of its message, its ideas, its subject matter, or its content.” Nor does anyone else.

Separately he said:

“If the First Amendment means anything, it means that a State has no business telling a man, sitting alone in his own house, what books he may read or what films he may watch.”

“Our whole constitutional heritage rebels at the thought of giving government the power to control men’s minds.”

No one on the US Supreme Court today approaches the stature of Brennan and Marshall.

Their support for equal justice under law no longer exists in the US, police state injustice replacing it, including efforts to censor views dark forces consider objectionable.

We're all **Julian Assange, Chelsea Manning**, and others like them.

Their fate could be ours by challenging powerful interests — wanting free and open expression replaced by controlling the message.

What's going on is the hallmark of totalitarian rule — enforced with police state harshness.

When truth-telling and dissent are considered existential threats, free and open societies no longer exist — the slippery slope where the US, UK, and other Western states are heading.

A Final Comment

Last year, WikiLeaks said the following:

Assange is “an Australian journalist who founded WikiLeaks in 2006.”

He “was the editor of WikiLeaks until September 2018: six months of his effective incommunicado detention in the Ecuadorian embassy in London then prompted Julian to appoint Kristin Hrafnsdottir as WikiLeaks editor-in-chief. Julian remains WikiLeaks’ publisher.”

“Wikileaks’ publications have had enormous impact. They have changed many peoples’ views of governments, enabling them to see their secrets.”

“They have changed journalism as a practice, as debates have raged over the ethics of secrecy, transparency and reporting on stolen documents.”

“WikiLeaks has gained the admiration of people and organizations all over the world, as evidenced in the numerous awards it has won.”

“For these contributions to public accountability and the historical record, Assange has been arrested in the United Kingdom and indicted in the United States.”

“The US requests Assange’s extradition and has charged him with 17 counts under the Espionage Act of 1917 for the publication of truthful material in the public interest.”

“Assange is the first journalist in history the US has charged with Espionage for publishing.”

“He also faces one count of conspiracy to commit computer crime based on his alleged reporter-source communications with whistleblower Chelsea Manning.”

“This charge would criminalize basic journalistic activity, as the indictment details alleged attempts to help Manning protect her anonymity as a journalistic source.”

“If extradited, Assange faces the prospect of life imprisonment in the United States” — for the “crime” of truth-telling journalism the way it’s supposed to be, what establishment media long ago was abandoned, operating as press agents for powerful interests.

*

Note to readers: please click the share buttons below. Forward this article to your email lists.

Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Award-winning author **Stephen Lendman** lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. He is a Research Associate of the Centre for Research on Globalization (CRG)

His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html>

Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com.

The original source of this article is Global Research
Copyright © [Stephen Lendman](#), Global Research, 2020

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: **[Stephen Lendman](#)**

About the author:

Stephen Lendman lives in Chicago. He can be reached at lendmanstephen@sbcglobal.net. His new book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

<http://www.claritypress.com/LendmanIII.html> Visit his blog site at sjlendman.blogspot.com. Listen to cutting-edge discussions with distinguished guests on the Progressive Radio News Hour on the Progressive Radio Network. It airs three times weekly: live on Sundays at 1PM Central time plus two prerecorded archived programs.

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca