

Senator the Hon Marise Payne,
Minister for Foreign Affairs
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27 May 2020

Dear Minister,

We the undersigned representatives of Australian human rights, digital rights and civil society organisations are calling for your urgent intervention on behalf of Mr Julian Assange.

Mr Assange and his colleagues at WikiLeaks helped extend the power of investigative journalism and truth-telling into the digital age, exposing war crimes and human rights abuses to public view. As a result, he has paid a heavy penalty.

In May 2019, Professor Nils Melzer, the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture declared that Mr Assange had been “exposed to persistent, progressively severe abuse ranging from systematic judicial persecution and arbitrary confinement in the Ecuadorian embassy, to his oppressive isolation, harassment and surveillance inside the embassy, and from deliberate collective ridicule, insults and humiliation, to open instigation of violence and even repeated calls for his assassination.” He stated that Mr Assange shows the symptoms of an individual subjected to torture.

Professor Melzer’s review was undertaken well before the global pandemic, which has severely disrupted the UK’s prison and judicial systems. Since then, the situation has deteriorated gravely, with remand prisoners now subjected to effective solitary confinement.

The Australian government should be willing to intervene to protect the lives of Australians caught up in legal processes in foreign countries, where those proceedings violate international law.

Before the court reconvenes on 1 June, we request of you the following:

1. To make representation on Mr Assange’s behalf that he be released on bail immediately;
2. To relay to us the outcome of this representation.

Mr Assange is a publisher, a father and an Australian citizen. It is time he had the support of his Government.

We await your response,

yours sincerely,

Suelette Dreyfus, Blueprint for Free Speech
Stuart Rees, Sydney Peace Foundation
George Newhouse, National Justice Project
Lizzie O’Shea, Digital Rights Watch

Victorian Council for Civil Liberties (Liberty Victoria)
Nicholas Cowdery AO QC, President, New South Wales Council for Civil Liberties
Valerie Joy, Alternatives to Violence Queensland
Christine McKenzie, PEN Melbourne
Margaret Pestorius, Australian Nonviolence Projects
Cate Adams, Wage Peace
Dr Sue Wareham OAM, Medical Association for the Prevention of War
Tony Kevin, Canberra
Stanley Koulouris, Unions Australia, Sydney.
Dr K.H. Sievers, Australian Voice
Ian Rose, Support Assange & WikiLeaks Coalition (Sydney Aus)
Lorese Vera, Convenor, Canberra Action 4 Assange.
Tristan Sykes Convenor, Free Assange Hobart
Clare Smith, Adelaide support group for Assange
Margaret Grace Richardson, Founder - Julian Assange Supporters Alice Springs
Sean O'Reilly, Brisbane Assange Action Brisbane Queensland
Rod Lemin, Brisbane Assange Action Brisbane Queensland
Paul Oboohov, Socialist Alliance, Canberra Branch
Melbourne Activist Legal Support (MALS)
Raine Sinclair, Melbourne4WikiLeaks
Tom Cooper, Melbourne4WikiLeaks
Lorine Anita Brice, Melbourne4WikiLeaks
Kate Hecimovic, Melbourne4WikiLeaks
Joe Lorback, Solidarity Sound System
Danielle Wood, People For Assange
Mitchell Duirs, Perth 4 Assange, WA
Walter Mellado, Australians For Assange
Amelia Ryan, Australians For Assange
Dianne Andary, Australians For Assange
Desmond McMillan, Australians For Assange
Phillip Adams, Australians For Assange
Camillo De Luca, Australians For Assange
Rosemary Gower, Riverland Support Group for Julian Assange's Freedom
Jean Lee, Adelaide Friends of Wikileaks