**A murderous system is being created before our very eyes says UN expert Page 4**

*I am convinced that we are in serious danger of losing press freedoms* says Nils Melzer, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

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**War on journalism**

**Assange and press freedom on (show) trial**

*Man is least himself when he talks with his own person. Give a man a mask, and he will tell you the truth.*

This famous quote from Oscar Wilde resounded in my head when, wandering around Venice in the spring of 2013, I stumbled into a work-shop famous for its Venetian masks. Wilde’s quote has been cited many times in relation to the founder of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange, to convey his intuition that hiding behind an anonymous identity helps truth-tellers in the digital age. It is the concept at the very basis of WikiLeaks’ platform, which allows whistleblowers and sources to submit secret documents anonymously.

As I entered the workshop, which famously provided Stanley Kubrick with masks for the orgy scene in Eyes Wide Shut, a gorgeous Sun-like mask caught my eye. I bought it and in May 2012 took it to the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where Julian Assange was ready to mask the first year of his confinement in the embassy. He had been hided up in there since the 19th of June, 2012. A tiny building, rather depress- ing and dark even by London standards. Who better to bring some sun there than an Italian? In the six years and ten months he had remained confined between those four walls before his arrest, that Venetian Sun mask was the only sun Julian Assange had seen.

For the last ten years I have worked with him as a media partner for my newspaper, working on all the WikiLeaks documents. In all these years, I have only met him as a free man once, in September 2010. After that meeting, I always met with him under house arrest and then in the embassy.

We journalists witness great suffering on a regular basis whenever we cover natural disasters, or wars, or even meet sources in distressing predicaments. Over the last nine years, it has been sad for me to watch Julian Assange’s health seriously declining, as he spent year after year in a tiny building without even one hour a day outdoors, the hour assured in my country to even some of the most heinous mafia killers. It has also been sad to watch him struggling with confinement. I remember how I once mentioned a nice Italian village in the Mediterranean Sea. He closed his eyes and told me he was trying to remember what it was like to be in the limitless spaces at sea.

I have known Julian for a decade, I have watched from the very start as his case has unfolded, followed and investigated it using the Freedom of Information Act in four jurisdictions: Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia.

In the summer of 2015, when

Continued on page 12

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**Month of decentralised solidarity with Assange, whistleblowers and press freedom worldwide**

**Editorial**

On September 7th 2020, the farcical extradition hearing of Julian Assange resumes for 14 weeks. If extradited to the US – where granted no “First Amendment” protection – he faces 175 years in a super-max prison. The US, the UK, aided by Ecuador, Sweden and others, are attempting to silence Assange and WikiLeaks. Their aim is to set a precedent that will globally harm the ability to publish information that governments want to keep secret, along with our collective capacity to organise and act based on that information.

The show trial of Assange heralds the intended destruction of our right to a free, independent, incisive and investigative press. The US seeks to criminalise and deter national security reporting in particular, as well as actions journalists take to protect their sources. The attempted labelling of journalism and the organising of public access to information as “conspiracy for espionage” by the US is unacceptable by democratic standards as it cripples the right of the public to know what governments do in their name.

The documents released by WikiLeaks for which Assange stands accused provide comprehensive evidence of the brutal war crimes committed in Iraq and Afghanistan, accessible in an undeniable, authentic and searchable form. WikiLeaks operates as any investigative journalist should in the 21st century; protecting their sources and securing communications in their exposing of government lies and corruption.

As many international experts, NGOs, lawyers, journalists and UN special rapporteurs have observed, the documents published by WikiLeaks are undoubtedly of immense interest to the public around the world. These releases have earned Assange and WikiLeaks many global distinctions and prestigious journalistic awards.

It is now time to reclaim this essential part of our collective history, by defending Assange, investigative journalists and whistleblowers worldwide.

During the weeks of the hearing and beyond, anti-war and anti-government activists across the globe will be using all the creative means available offline and online to express their solidarity, denounce this parodic fraud of justice and defend Julian Assange and celebrate the protection of journalistic sources.

In many joyful and inventive ways including music, performances, occupation of the public space and wikis, and through decentralised means, we intend to remind everyone of our collective right and duty to hold power to account by exposing governments’ secrets, their lies and crimes.

The prosecution of Assange is the persecution of a free, independent press, the persecution of Truth and Justice. It is the persecution of each one of us and of our future ability to denounce and combat abuses of power.

Defending Assange means defending our Future! We stand in solidarity and organise everywhere to tell this story to the World.


More information and inspiration about upcoming actions and events all over the globe: challengepower.info/sept2020hearingactions

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"Persecution" by Norwegian street artist AFK

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"I’ve known Julian Assange for 10 years. His confinement and arrest are a scandal"
This is the opening shot of a new War on Journalism, and if we do not force it to a halt before the next shot is fired, this war will not be fought long enough. If a man who has never lived in the US can be forcibly delivered to its prisons for publishing truthful information, other journalists will soon join him.

Edward Snowden
“A murderous system is being created before our very eyes,” says UN torture expert
The publication of these documents by media outlets was clearly in the public interest, and not an act of espionage. Julian Assange's contribution to journalism is undeniable. Let's see whether it will be as effective in twenty to thirty years. Though not as hideous or immediately dangerous, the world in twenty to thirty years will be a very different place. And if we lose our freedoms, it's already happening. Our current government projects our freedom to a time in which we will no longer be able to write what we want. As a result, the New Zealand government in Australia was raided in con- tradiction with what has been observed. The failure of Western Rule, if it was not the new War on Terrorism, is clear. The obvious, once again, is that WikiLeaks is in- strumental to the process of expanded secrecy. If the truth can no longer be spoken, that freedom is among the last to be protected. Because everything is kept secret, because investigative journalism is labeled as espionage, and because can be cunningly used to create a situation whereby the world of espionage becomes the world of public order. And then they open fire. The father has to save the wounded. The driver has to push a person into a position where he is unable to defend himself. The driver has already polluted the soil, and on the strength of classified evidence. Nobody has seen the driver. The driver has already polluted the soil, and on the strength of classified evidence. Nobody has seen the driver. They made his life difficult. They made his life difficult. He was denied his fundamental right to defend himself and to be treated as a person, and he has the right to defend his reputation.
Why the world needs WikiLeaks

There are two contradictory myths about how we operate: on one hand, that we simply dump whatever comes to us into the public’s arm, and on the other, that we pick and choose material to harm our alleged political enemies.

The WeeklyLeak archives

Global Intelligence Files

From the WikiLeaks archives

Global Intelligence Files

On 27 February, 2011, WikiLeaks began publishing The Global Intelligence Files, classified diplomatic cables from over 250 countries, and diplomatic cables from the United States, primarily from the State Department, the CIA, the National Security Agency, the Department of Homeland Security, the US Defence Intelligence Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, the National Intelligence Council and the US Defence Contract Audit Agency. The leaks expose the intra-state rivalry of governments and the political machinations of global intelligence agencies. 'It is as if we are RXing the world to let the public into the arm-twisting, backroom machinations of diplomacy,' the New York Times police

Sara Harrison

Former journalist and former editor for WikiLeaks

On 4 March 2011, WikiLeaks published "Sara Harrison's letter to the editors of The Guardian", "The alarm of us all", "To the editor of The Guardian: "The global internet is a public utility, and we are its guardians".

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Stated purposes of WikiLeaks

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The UK Extraterritoriality Treaty specifically prohibits extradition for political offences.

Unknown to many, the UK Extraterritoriality Treaty, which defines political crimes, poses a significant threat to freedom of expression, particularly in cases involving information merely becoming known to the public. The treaty explicitly prohibits the extradition of anyone for "any information that was obtained or communicated to him or her in the course of, or in connection with, any official capacity, or in the course of any commercial, industrial or professional activity".

This means that Julian Assange, who has been convicted in the UK for publishing information that was widely held to be in the public interest, could now be extradited to the US under the terms of this treaty.

Furthermore, the political nature of the charges against Assange is undeniable. The 18 charges laid by the US Department of Justice against him all relate solely to the 2010 publication of the cables from WikiLeaks, which was widely recognized as a landmark event in the history of journalism.

The US government's attempt to extradite Assange for these charges is a clear violation of the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Everyone has the right to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any medium and regardless of frontiers."

This case has significant implications for freedom of expression worldwide. If the UK government were to extradite Assange to the US, it would set a dangerous precedent and undermine the protection of free speech established by the UN Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

In this context, the intervention of the UK government is crucial. While the government has stated that it will not extradite Assange to the US, the threat remains. The case highlights the importance of the principle of non-refoulement, which holds that individuals should not be returned to a country where they face a real risk of torture, ill-treatment, or other serious human rights violations.

The UK government has a duty to protect Assange from this risk. The case also highlights the need for international cooperation in the protection of human rights and the importance of upholding the rule of law.
I've known Julian Assange for 10 years...

Continued from page 1

Julian Assange had already spent three years inside the embassy, I decided it was important to access the full documentation on his case to try to reconstruct it using factual information. It was at that point that I filed my comprehensive FOIA request on the Julian Assange and WikiLeaks case in four jurisdictions. I ran up against a real rubber wall, one so persistent that have been forced to sue the Swedish and British authorities.

The documents I have managed to obtain after a lengthy FOIA litigation, which is still ongoing, provide indisputable evidence of the UK’s role in helping to create the legal and diplomatic quagmire which has kept Julian Assange arbitrarily detained since 2010, as established by the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (UNWGAD).

It was the UK Crown Prosecution Service which advised the Swedish prosecutors against the only judicial strategy they could have brought the Swedish rape investigation to a quick closure: questioning Assange in London, rather than trying to extradite him to Stockholm. It was the Crown Prosecution Service which tried to dissuade the Swedish prosecutors from dropping the case in 2013. Why did the Crown Prosecution Service act this way? And why did the Crown Prosecution Service write to their Swedish counterpart: “Please do not think that the case is being dealt with as just a routine matter”?

When I tried to dig into these facts, I discovered crucial gaps in the Crown Prosecution Service’s documentation and asked the Service to provide an explanation for them. Their answer was rather incredible: they replied to me and my lawyers that they had destroyed the emails, even though the case is still ongoing, very high-profile and controversial.

The Crown Prosecution Service which destroyed the records is the very same agency in charge of handling the extradition request from the United States, as well as from Sweden, if the Swedish prosecutors reopen the case before the statute of limitations on the rape allegations expires. Will anyone demand transparency and accountability from the Crown Prosecution Service in their handling of the Assange case from the very beginning?

As I watched Scotland Yard arresting Julian Assange and pushing him inside the van, with one of the agents seemingly barely able to hold back laughter, my attention latched onto two details of the scene. One was Assange’s spectral white face, drained by the chronic lack of sunlight. The other was the book of interview with Gore Vidal he was holding, History of The National Security State, one of the books I had brought to the embassy to help keep his mind busy and working. I gave him Vidal’s book in December 2016, after the US elections, and I knew he would have appreciated Gore Vidal’s brilliant analyses of the US national security state. Julian Assange doesn’t just understand technology, he also understands power.

The WikiLeaks founder is now in prison and no one knows how his fight against extradition to the US will end. His situation appears very precarious. I have known Julian Assange for 10 years...