

January 16, 2025

Joseph Biden,
President of the United States

Elizabeth Oyer,
Pardon Attorney

Dear President Biden and Pardon Attorney Oyer,

We write on behalf of the undersigned press freedom and civil liberties organizations to request a full and unconditional pardon for WikiLeaks founder and publisher Julian Assange.

Assange's prosecution and imprisonment ended in a [plea agreement](#) last year in which Assange pled guilty to violating [Section 793\(g\)](#) of the Espionage Act. While Assange's guilty plea does not create a binding legal precedent, his conviction sends a message that, in the United States, gathering and disseminating information from sources can be a crime. Members of [Congress](#), constitutional law [professors](#) and the world's leading [newspapers](#) have warned that normalizing this kind of prosecution endangers press freedom.

We understand that the Department of Justice rejects Assange's defense that he acted as a journalist. The First Amendment, however, protects a wide range of newsgathering activities. In addition, the conduct alleged to constitute the criminal conspiracy in the plea agreement is indistinguishable from conduct that conventional journalists engage in routinely. That is why the Obama administration [chose not to](#) indict Assange.

Future administrations, however, may use the same legal theories prosecutors employed against Assange to prosecute journalists, conventional or otherwise, who reveal secrets the government doesn't want told.

While we believe the Espionage Act should be held unconstitutional if ever applied to criminalize routine journalism, the mere prospect of such a prosecution—which is enhanced by Assange's conviction under the act—creates an immeasurable chilling effect on investigative reporting and will continue to do so if you do not take action.

We join tens of thousands of [Americans](#), including members of [Congress](#), in urging you to pardon Assange. Doing so will put future administrations – as well as leaders abroad who may be tempted to repress and punish journalists – on notice that the United States values press freedom and recognizes that, as President Biden [often says](#), “journalism is not a crime.”

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Association of Foreign Press
Correspondents, USA
Committee to Protect Journalists
Courage Foundation
Defending Rights & Dissent

Demand Progress Education Fund
Fight for the Future
First Amendment Coalition
First Amendment Foundation
Freedom of the Press Foundation

Index on Censorship
National Coalition Against Censorship
Partnership for Civil Justice Fund
Project Censored
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

RootsAction.org
Whistleblower & Source Protection Program
(WHISPeR) at ExposeFacts
World BEYOND War
X-Lab