

19 February 2024

Letter to the UK Secretary of State for the Home Department, ahead of the hearing on Julian Assange's extradition

The Rt Hon James Cleverly MP
Secretary of State for the Home Department
United Kingdom

Dear Home Secretary,

We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, respectfully wish to underline our concerns regarding the Assange case, the impact it is having on the freedom of the press, as well as the serious risks to Julian Assange's health and welfare in the event he is extradited to the United States.

Julian Assange has been part of the institution of a free press essential to any democracy by being at the forefront of investigative journalism. With his work through WikiLeaks he has brought to light some of the most significant acts of government corruption, including war crimes and human rights abuses.

Julian Assange is currently the target of a precedent-setting legal attack where a democratic government can criminalize a publication of truthful information. The charges against him raise serious concerns about undeniable and far-reaching implications for press freedom and the practice of investigative journalism.

The US government is attempting to use its 1917 Espionage Act against a journalist and publisher for the very first time. If the US is successful in having Assange extradited, it will have redefined investigative journalism. It will have extended its judicial reach internationally and applied it to a non-US citizen without a corresponding extension of First Amendment rights.

Originally, the District Judge refused his extradition on the grounds that the harsh isolation conditions he would face in the US prison system would put his life at risk. This ruling was only overturned on appeal after the US offered conditional assurances, which Amnesty International called "deeply flawed" as "the fact that the US has reserved the right to change its mind at any time means that these assurances are not worth the paper they are written on".

While he sought asylum in the Ecuadorean Embassy, it has been exposed that spying operations were carried on Assange and his lawyers on behalf of the CIA, and media reports have revealed that the CIA was planning to kidnap and assassinate Assange.

The UK authorities must match the gravity of Mr Assange's situation with an appropriate level of protection, in line with the demands of the UN rapporteur on torture's recent statement: "The risk of being placed in prolonged solitary confinement, despite his precarious mental health status, and to receive a potentially disproportionate sentence raises questions as to whether Mr. Assange's extradition to the United States would be compatible with the United Kingdom's international human rights obligations, particularly under article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as respective articles 3 of the UN Convention against Torture and the European Convention on Human Rights."

With this letter, we ask you to ensure the protection and safety of Julian Assange, to release him from the prison, and to prevent his extradition. The future of freedom of the press and of the right of citizens to be informed is at stake.

Yours sincerely,

The undersigned Members of the European Parliament

1. Patrick Breyer
2. Clare Daly
3. Markéta Gregorova
4. Sabrina Pignedoli
5. Milan Brglez
6. François Alfonsi
7. Francisco Guerreiro
8. Martin Buschmann
9. Piernicola Pedicini
10. Gwendoline Delbos-Corfield
11. Emmanuel Maurel
12. Martina Michels
13. Saskia Bricmont
14. Ivan Vilibor Sinčić
15. Mikulas Peksa
16. Clara Ponsatí I Obiols
17. Malte Gallée
18. Martin Sonneborn
19. Marc Botenga
20. João Pimenta Lopes
21. Sandra Pereira
22. Idoia Villanueva
23. Marcel Kolaja
24. Pierre Larrouturou
25. Stelios Kouloglou
26. Dietmar Köster
27. Karen Melchior
28. Sara Matthieu

29. Stasys Jakeliūnas
30. Ana Miranda
31. Özlem Demirel
32. Diana Riba i Giner
33. Dino Giarusso
34. Kateřina Konečná
35. Miguel Urban Crespo
36. Mick Wallace
37. Marisa Matias
38. José Gusmão
39. Rob Rooker
40. Thomas Rudner
41. Matjaž Nemeč
42. Sergey Lagodinsky
43. Manuela Ripa
44. Damien Carême
45. Philippe Lamberts
46. Ignazio Corrao
47. Esther Sanz Selva
48. Francesca Donato