

20 Press Freedom Organisations Urge Patel Against Julian Assange Extradition

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International organisations have written to Home Secretary Priti Patel urging her to reject the US government’s request for the extradition of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

The 20 press freedom, free expression and journalists’ organisations have also requested a meeting with Ms Patel to discuss their concerns over the case.

The letter was sent after chief magistrate Paul Goldspring referred Mr Assange’s case to Ms Patel, paving the way for him to face prosecution for exposing US war crimes.

Ms Patel is now responsible for deciding in the next two months whether to accept the extradition request.

Mr Assange’s lawyers warn that the prosecution is politically motivated and that their client faces up to 175 years in jail.

Signatories of the letter to Ms Patel include Reporters Without Borders, Article 19, Big Brother Watch, Pen International, the International Federation of Journalists, the National Union of Journalists and the European Centre for Press and Media Freedom.

In the letter, the organisations express “serious concerns” about the possibility of extraditing the WikiLeaks founder, including over his physical and mental health.

They warn that Mr Assange would be unable to adequately defend himself in US courts due to a lack of a public interest defence in the Espionage Act and that his prosecution would set a dangerous precedent for journalism internationally.

The letter reads:

“We ask you, Home Secretary, to honour the UK government’s commitment to

protecting and promoting media freedom and reject the US extradition request.

“We ask you to release Mr Assange from Belmarsh prison and allow him to return to his young family after many years of isolation.

“Finally, we ask you to publicly commit to ensuring that no publisher, journalist or source ever again faces detention in the UK for publishing information in the public interest.”

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