

Assange's Case Represents 'Failure of Western Law' - Says UN's Nils Melzer

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An interview was recently given by UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, to [Republik](#) on Julian Assange. The headline reads "A murderous system is being created before our very eyes". During the interview, Melzer details just why he has got so involved in Assange's case and what the implications of it are for the future of humanity.

Just to recap, Julian Assange, the former Wikileaks editor, was arrested last year after spending years incarcerated in the Ecuadorian embassy, where he sought asylum for fear of being deported to the US to face charges relating to his publication of leaked documents. It was back in 2010 that Wikileaks published damning evidence of torture and unlawful killings carried out by the US army, provided for by Chelsea Manning. He subsequently was wanted by Sweden on charges of rape, charges which have since been dropped, and which it has been suggested were part of a set-up to engineer Assange's deportation to the US. Ecuador finally gave him up to the UK authorities last April, by inviting them into the embassy to extract Assange, after seven years of interment within the embassy walls.

The Wikileaks founder's ordeal is set to continue however, it seems. The 48-year old is currently wasting away inside Belmarsh prison, where he was kept for months in solitary confinement, before incredibly, prisoners themselves protested and asked that he be allowed to mingle with the others. The authorities recently agreed to this concession, but it all too little too late it seems for a man who has been destroyed by the US and British governments, for essentially trying to tell the truth.

As for Nils Melzer, he explains in his recent interview why he has specifically got involved in Assange's case. His reasons are given as follows: 1. He says that Assange was disclosing evidence of systematic torture by the US army, but he himself has been persecuted for this. 2. Assange has been so ill-treated that he is now exhibiting signs of psychological torture. 3. There is a high chance of him being extradited to a country which Amnesty International has condemned for its use of torture. He also feels that the case has a special symbolic significance for the future of our democracies.

There are many extraordinary points made in Melzer's interview, which I thoroughly recommend reading: the made-up rape allegation and fabricated evidence in Sweden, the pressure from the British authorities not to drop the case, the biased judge, detention in a maximum security prison, psychological torture - and future extradition to the US, where he could face up to 175 years in jail for exposing war crimes. But I think one of the most significant is the role that the media has played in this case. For Melzer admits that even he, initially, until he became aware of all the facts, was prejudiced against Assange as a result

of what he saw and heard in the media. And it was the mainstream media that first began publishing false accusations that Assange had been accused of rape, the media that blackened his character.

The role of the media in Assange's downfall cannot be underestimated. Even now, very few mainstream journalists are willing to cover his plight. Melzer states that the whole point of Assange's 'show trial' has been to intimidate journalists from doing what Assange did: "The message to all of us is: This is what will happen to you if you emulate the Wikileaks model."

He believes the case is a scandal and 'represents the failure of Western law'. If convicted, he will consider it to be a 'death sentence for freedom of the press.'

If anyone was to be convicted, Melzer argues, it should have been the individuals who carried the massacres and torture Julian Assange reported on. But to date, not one has been charged, nor any criminal investigation been carried out into their actions. Instead, Assange has been the victim of a new harsh reality: "It is becoming a crime to tell the truth" Melzer states.

On Wednesday it was reported that a petition has been signed by over 130 prominent Germans in favour of Julian Assange's release. The signatories include names such as former German vice-chancellor Sigmar Gabriel and previous vice president of the European Commission, Gunter Verhuegen. The petition states that Assange's continued detention in the UK's highest security prison – Belmarsh – violates his human rights, particularly given his poor state of health.

But these pleas are likely to fall on deaf ears. In Assange's case it's clear who is calling the shots, and that even European governments have been at the mercy of the US' demands. And yet western nations follow the US's lead at their own folly – our democracies are crumbling before our very eyes.

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