

# Assange Is a Journalist, Should Not be Persecuted for Publishing the Truth

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*Last week, rallies in support of Julian Assange were held around the world. We participated in two #AssangeUnity events seeking to #FreeAssange in Washington, DC.*

*This is the beginning of a new phase of the campaign to stop the persecution of Julian Assange and allow him to leave the Ecuadorian Embassy in London without the threat of being arrested in the UK or facing prosecution by the United States.*



On April 10 2017 people gathered outside the Ecuadorian Embassy in London to celebrate the 11th Birthday of WikiLeaks. From [Wise-Up Action: A Solidarity Network for Manning and Assange](#).

The Assange Case is a Linchpin For Freedom of the Press and Freedom of Information in the 21st Century

The threat of prosecution against Julian Assange for his work as editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks will be a key to defining what Freedom of the Press means in the 21st Century. Should people be allowed to know the truth if their government is corrupt, violating the law or committing war crimes? Democracy cannot exist when people are misled by a concentrated corporate media that puts forth a narrative on behalf of the government and big business.

This is not the first time that prosecution of a journalist will define Freedom of the Press. Indeed, the roots of Freedom of the Press in the United States go back to [the prosecution of John Peter Zenger](#), a publisher who was accused of libel in 1734 for publishing articles critical of the British royal governor, William Cosby. Zenger was held in prison for eight months awaiting trial. In the trial, his defense took its case directly to the jury.

For five hundred years, [Britain had made it illegal to publish “any slanderous News”](#) that may cause “discord” between the king and his people. Zenger’s defense argued that he had published the truth about Cosby and therefore did not commit a crime. His lawyer “argued that telling the truth did not cause governments to fall. Rather, he argued, ‘abuse of power’ caused governments to fall.” The jury heard the argument, recessed and in ten minutes returned with a not guilty verdict.

The same issue is presented by Julian Assange — publishing the truth is not a crime. Wikileaks, with Assange as its editor and publisher, redefined reporting in the 21st Century by [giving people the ability to be whistleblowers to reveal the abuses of government and big business](#). People anonymously send documents to Wikileaks via the Internet and then after reviewing and authenticating them, Wikileaks publishes them. The documents sometimes reveal serious crimes, which has resulted in Assange being threatened with a secret indictment for espionage that could keep him incarcerated for the rest of his life.

This puts the Assange case at [the forefront of 21st Century journalism](#) as he is democratizing the media by giving people the power to know the truth not reported, or falsely reported, by the corporate media. Breaking elite control over the media narrative is a serious threat to their power because information is power. And, with the internet and the ability of every person to act as a media outlet through social and independent media, control of the narrative is moving toward the people.

WikiLeaks is filling a void with [trust in the corporate media at record lows](#). A recent Gallup Poll found [only 32% trust the media](#). There has been a significant [drop in newspaper circulation and revenue](#), an [ongoing decline since 1980](#). Also, [fewer people rely on television for news](#).

In this environment, the internet-based news is becoming more dominant and WikiLeaks is a particular threat to media monopolization by the elites. Research is showing that [independent and social media are having an impact on people’s opinions](#).

The threats to Julian Assange are occurring when [dissent is under attack](#), particularly [media dissent](#); the [FBI has a task force to monitor social media](#). The attack on [net neutrality](#), [Google](#) using [algorithms](#) to [prevent searches](#) for [alternative media](#) and [Facebook](#) controlling [the what people see](#) are all part of the attack on the democratized media..

### The Astounding Impact of WikiLeaks’ Reporting

The list of WikiLeaks’ revelations [has become astounding](#). The release of [emails from Hillary Clinton, her presidential campaign](#), and the [Democratic National Committee](#) had a major impact on the election. People saw the truth of [Clinton’s connections to Wall Street](#), her [two-faced politics](#) of having a public view and a private view as well as the [DNC’s efforts to undermine the campaign of Sen. Bernie Sanders](#). People saw the truth and the truth hurt Hillary Clinton and the Democrats.

Among the most famous documents published were those provided by Chelsea Manning on [Iraq, Afghanistan](#), the [Guantanamo Prison](#) and the [US State Department](#). The [Collateral Murder](#) video among the Manning Iraq war documents shows US soldiers in an Apache helicopter gunning down a group of innocent men, including two Reuters employees, a photojournalist, and his driver, killing 16 and wounding two children. Millions have viewed the video showing that when a van pulled up to evacuate the wounded, the [soldiers again](#)

[opened fire](#). A soldier says, “Oh yeah, look at those dead bastards.”

Another massive leak came from Edward Snowden, the NSA whistleblower who [exposed massive NSA spying](#) in the United States and around the world. This was followed by [Vault 7](#), a series of leaks on the Central Intelligence Agency’s activities, and [Vault 8](#), which included source code on CIA malware activities.

WikiLeaks has also published documents on other countries, e.g. WikiLeaks published a series of [documents on Russian spying](#). [WikiLeaks has been credited by many with helping to spark the Tunisian Revolution](#) which led to the Arab Spring, e.g., showing the widespread [corruption of the 23-year rule of the Ben Ali](#). [Foreign Policy reported](#) that “the candor of the cables released by WikiLeaks did more for Arab democracy than decades of backstage U.S. diplomacy.” [WikiLeaks’ publications](#) provided democracy activists in Egypt with information needed to spark protests and [provided background](#) that explained the Egyptian uprising. Traditional media publications like [the New York Times relied on WikiLeaks](#) to analyze the causes of the uprising.

WikiLeaks informed the Bahrain public about their government’s cozy relationship with the US, describing a [\\$5 billion joint-venture with Occidental Petroleum](#) and [\\$300 million in U.S. military sales](#) and how the [U.S. Navy is the foundation](#) of Bahrain’s national security.

[John Pilger describes WikiLeaks’ documents, writing,](#)

“No investigative journalism in my lifetime can equal the importance of what WikiLeaks has done in calling rapacious power to account.”



Free Assange rally at the White House, June 19, 2018. From Gateway Pundit.

### Assange Character Assassination And Embassy Imprisonment

Julian Assange made powerful enemies in governments around the world, corporate media, and big business because he burst false narratives with the truth. As a result, governments fought back, including the United States, Great Britain, and Sweden, which has led to Assange being trapped in the embassy of Ecuador in London for six years.

The root of the incarceration were allegations in Sweden. Sweden's charges against Assange were [initially dropped](#) by the chief prosecutor, [two weeks later they found a prosecutor](#) to pursue a rape investigation. One of the women had [CIA connections](#) and bragged about her relationship with Assange in [tweets](#) she tried to erase. She even [published](#) a 7-step program for legal revenge against lovers. The [actions of the women do not seem to show rape](#) or any kind of abuse. One woman held a party with him after the encounter and another went out to eat with him. In November 2016, [Assange was interviewed by Swedish prosecutors](#) for four hours at the Ecuadorian embassy. In December 2016, Assange published [tweets showing his innocence and the sex was consensual](#). Without making a statement on Assange's guilt, the [Swedish investigators dropped the charges](#) in May 2017. The statute of limitations for Swedish charges will be up in 2020.

As [John Pilger pointed out](#),

“Katrin Axelsson and Lisa Longstaff of Women Against Rape summed it up when they wrote, ‘The allegations against [Assange] are a smokescreen behind which a number of governments are trying to clamp down on WikiLeaks for having audaciously revealed to the public their secret planning of wars and occupations with their attendant rape, murder, and destruction... The authorities care so little about violence against women that they manipulate rape allegations at will.’”

Assange is still trapped in the embassy as he [would be arrested for violating his bail six years ago](#). But, the real threat to Assange is the possibility of a secret indictment against him in the United States for espionage. US and British officials have refused to tell Assange's lawyers whether there was a sealed indictment or a sealed extradition order against him. Former CIA Director, now Secretary of State, Mike [Pompeo has described WikiLeaks as a non-state hostile intelligence service](#) and [described his actions as not protected](#) by the First Amendment. In April 2017, [CNN reported](#),

“US authorities have prepared charges to seek the arrest of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.”

The Obama Justice Department determined it would be difficult to bring charges against Assange because WikiLeaks wasn't alone in publishing documents stolen by Manning but the Trump DOJ believes he could be charged as an accomplice with Edward Snowden.

When the president campaigned, [Trump said he loved WikiLeaks](#) and regularly touted their disclosures. But, in April 2017, Attorney General Jeff [Sessions said that Assange's arrest is a “priority.”](#)

### Time To Stop The Persecution Of Julian Assange

The smearing of Assange sought to discredit him and undermine the important journalism of WikiLeaks. [Caitlin Johnstone writes](#) that they smear him because “they can kill all sympathy for him and his outlet, it's as good for their agendas as actually killing him.”

Even with this character assassination many people still support Assange. This was seen during the [#Unity4J online vigil](#), which saw the participation of activists, journalists,

whistleblowers and filmmakers calling for the end of Assange's solitary confinement and his release. This was followed a week later by [20 protests around the world calling for Assange's release](#).

Julian Assange has opened journalism's democracy door; the power to report is being redistributed, government employees and corporate whistleblowers have been empowered and greater transparency is becoming a reality. The people of the United States should demand that Assange not face prosecution and embrace a 21st Century democratized media that provides greater transparency and accurate information about what government and business interests are doing. Prosecuting a news organization for publishing the truth, should be rejected and Assange should be freed.

You can support Julian Assange by spreading the word in your communities about what is happening to him and why. You can also show support for him on social media. We will continue to let you know when there are actions planned. And you can support the WikiLeaks Legal Defense Fund, run by the Courage Foundation\*, at [IAmWikiLeaks.org](http://IAmWikiLeaks.org).

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*Kevin Zeese and Margaret Flowers are co-directors of [Popular Resistance](#) where this article was originally published. Kevin is on the advisory board of the Courage Foundation.*

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