

Assange's 'Reprieve' Is Another Lie, Hiding the Real Goal of Keeping Him Endlessly Locked Up

The US has had years to clarify its intention to give Assange a fair trial but refuses to do so. The UK court's latest ruling is yet more collusion in his show trial

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The interminable and abhorrent saga of Julian Assange's incarceration for the crime of journalism continues. And once again, the headline news is a lie, one designed both to buy our passivity and to buy more time for the British and US establishments to keep the Wikileaks founder permanently disappeared from view.

The Guardian – which has a mammoth, undeclared conflict of interest in its coverage of the extradition proceedings against Assange (you can read about that [here](#) and [here](#)) – headlined the ruling by the UK High Court today as a “[temporary reprieve](#)” for Assange. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Julian Assange wins temporary reprieve in case against extradition to US

Judges grant WikiLeaks founder permission to appeal against removal from UK but only if UK and US are unable to provide suitable assurances



Five years on, Assange is still caged in Belmarsh high-security prison, convicted of absolutely nothing.

Five years on, he still faces a trial in the US on ludicrous charges under a century-old, draconian piece of legislation called the Espionage Act. Assange is not a US citizen and none of the charges relate to anything he did in the US.

Five years on, the English judiciary is still rubber-stamping his show trial – a warning to others not to expose state crimes, as Assange did in publishing details of British and US war crimes in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Five years on, judges in London are still turning a blind eye to Assange's sustained psychological torture, as the former United Nations legal expert Nils Melzer has documented.

The word "reprieve" is there – just as the judges' headline ruling that some of the grounds of his appeal have been "granted" – to conceal the fact that he is prisoner to an endless legal charade every bit as much as he is a prisoner in a Belmarsh cell.

In fact, today's ruling is yet further evidence that Assange is being denied due process and [his most basic legal rights](#) – as he has been for a decade or more.

In the ruling, the court strips him of any substantive grounds of appeal, precisely so there will be no hearing in which the public gets to learn more about the various British and US crimes he exposed, for which he is being kept in jail. He is thereby denied a public-interest defence against extradition. Or in the court's terminology, his "application to adduce fresh evidence is refused".

Even more significantly, Assange is specifically stripped of the right to appeal on the very legal grounds that should guarantee him an appeal, and should have ensured he was never subjected to a show trial in the first place. His extradition would clearly violate the prohibition in the Extradition Treaty between the UK and the US against extradition on political grounds.

Nonetheless, in their wisdom, the judges rule that Washington's vendetta against Assange for exposing its crimes is not driven by political considerations. Nor apparently was there a political factor to the CIA's efforts to [kidnap and assassinate](#) him after he was granted political asylum by Ecuador, precisely to protect him from the US administration's wrath.

What the court "grants" instead are three technical grounds of appeal – although in the small print, that "granted" is actually subverted to "adjourned". The "reprieve" celebrated by the media – supposedly a [victory for British justice](#) – actually pulls the legal rug from under Assange.

Each of those grounds of appeal can be reversed – that is, rejected – if Washington submits "assurances" to the court, however worthless they may end up being in practice. In which case, Assange is on a flight to the US and effectively disappeared into one of its domestic black sites.

Those three pending grounds of appeal on which the court seeks reassurance are that extradition will not:

- deny Assange his basic free speech rights;
- discriminate against him on the basis of his nationality, as a non-US citizen;
- or place him under threat of the death penalty in the US penal system.

The judiciary's latest bending over backwards to accommodate Washington's intention to keep Assange permanently locked out of view follows years of perverse legal proceedings in which the US has repeatedly been allowed to change the charges it is levelling against Assange at short notice to wrong-foot his legal team. It also follows years in which the US has had a chance to make clear its intention to provide Assange with a fair trial but has refused to do so.

Washington's true intentions are already more than clear: the US [spied on Assange's every move](#) while he was under the protection of the Ecuadorian embassy, violating his lawyer-client privilege; and the CIA plotted to kidnap and assassinate him.

Both are grounds that alone should have seen the case thrown out.

But there is nothing normal – or legal – about the proceedings against Assange. The case has always been about buying time. To disappear Assange from public view. To vilify him. To smash the revolutionary publishing platform he founded to help whistleblowers expose state crimes. To send a message to other journalists that the US can reach them wherever they live should they try to hold Washington to account for its criminality.

And worst of all, to provide a final solution for the nuisance Assange had become for the global superpower by trapping him in an endless process of incarceration and trial that, if it is allowed to drag on long enough, will most likely kill him.

Today's ruling is most certainly not a "reprieve". It is simply another stage in a protracted, faux-legal process designed to provide constant justifications for keeping Assange behind bars, and never-ending postponements of judgment day, when either Assange is set free or the British and US justice systems are exposed as hand servants of brutish, naked power.

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