

Justice in the Land of the Free

The cases of Griner and Assange

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I feel for American basketball player Brittney Griner. Did she break the law? Yes, she did, and she pled guilty at trial. But a sentence of nine years — to be spent in what the New York Times calls a “penal colony” — for bringing hashish into Russia for self-treatment (assuming this is true) seems overly harsh. But the law can be an ass. If humans have sovereignty over their own bodies, then it is just plain wrong to be hassled for what one chooses to consume.

On the other hand, Griner should be accorded the same treatment from the Russian justice system as any Russian would be accorded. If this has been the case, then it can be argued that [justice was meted out without favoritism](#) in the Russian system.

Still, if it was a packing error, then Griner is paying a high price for a mistake that on its face would cause no harm to any other person.

US president Joe Biden [called the sentence](#) “unacceptable” and said he will do all he can to bring Griner back to the United States. When a country considers that one of its citizens is a victim of injustice abroad, then a country should agitate on behalf of its citizen.

A prisoner swap with Russia has already been broached by the US, so Griner may be back stateside before long.

Julian Assange: A Victim of Injustice

There is a current case, however, that speaks to notions of justice in western countries. Biden apparently considers the American legal pursuit of Assange — an Australian citizen whose acts (i.e., journalism) were committed outside the US — as acceptable. The US claim to extraterritoriality is well known to China and [Meng Wanzhou](#).

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been languishing in some form of incarceration for over 20 years, and he now faces potential imprisonment for the rest of his life if extradited and found guilty of espionage in the US. People who are clued in realize these charges are

as phony as the sexual crimes alleged and dropped against him by Sweden. Assange's actual "crime" is exposing the crimes of the US; especially revelatory was the [Collateral Murder video](#) where US troops in an Apache helicopter gleefully gunned down Iraqi citizens on a street in Baghdad. The murderers remain scot-free. For exposing war crimes, Assange and Bradley Manning have been punished.

Is Australia concerned about justice for its citizens? Assange has hardly received an iota of Australian government concern or assistance compared to that Griner has received from the US. Assange has also received scant support from the Australian monopoly media. In fact, Australian government leaders and media have usually criticized Assange or distanced themselves from him.

What if China were switched with the US and found itself faced with what Assange is accused of by the US? What would be the situation then?

Assange, who [has not been overly kind to China](#), has, nonetheless, received support from China. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin [said](#),

"All eyes are on Assange's human rights conditions and what may become of him. Let us hope and believe that at the end of the day, fairness and justice will prevail. Hegemony and abuse of might will certainly not last forever."

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