

A Kingly Proposal: Letter from Julian Assange to King Charles III

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To His Majesty King Charles III,

On the coronation of my liege, I thought it only fitting to extend a heartfelt invitation to you to commemorate this momentous occasion by visiting your very own kingdom within a kingdom: His Majesty's Prison Belmarsh.

You will no doubt recall the wise words of a renowned playwright: "The quality of mercy is not strained. It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven upon the place beneath."

Ah, but what would that bard know of mercy faced with the reckoning at the dawn of your historic reign? After all, one can truly know the measure of a society by how it treats its prisoners, and your kingdom has surely excelled in that regard.

Your Majesty's Prison Belmarsh is located at the prestigious address of One Western Way, London, just a short foxhunt from the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich. How delightful it must be to have such an esteemed establishment bear your name.

It is here that 687 of your loyal subjects are held, supporting the United Kingdom's record as the nation with the largest prison population in Western Europe. As your noble government has recently declared, your kingdom is currently undergoing "the biggest expansion of prison places in over a century", with its ambitious projections showing an increase of the prison population from 82,000 to 106,000 within the next four years. Quite the legacy, indeed.

As a political prisoner, held at Your Majesty's pleasure on behalf of an embarrassed foreign sovereign, I am honoured to reside within the walls of this world class institution. Truly, your kingdom knows no bounds.

During your visit, you will have the opportunity to feast upon the culinary delights prepared for your loyal subjects on a generous budget of two pounds per day. Savour the blended tuna heads and the ubiquitous reconstituted forms that are purportedly made from chicken. And worry not, for unlike lesser institutions such as Alcatraz or San Quentin, there is no communal dining in a mess hall. At Belmarsh, prisoners dine alone in their cells, ensuring the utmost intimacy with their meal.

Beyond the gustatory pleasures, I can assure you that Belmarsh provides ample educational opportunities for your subjects. As Proverbs 22:6 has it: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Observe the shuffling queues at the medicine hatch, where inmates gather their prescriptions, not for daily use, but for the horizon-expanding experience of a “big day out”—all at once.

You will also have the opportunity to pay your respects to my late friend Manoel Santos, a gay man facing deportation to Bolsonaro’s Brazil, who took his own life just eight yards from my cell using a crude rope fashioned from his bedsheets. His exquisite tenor voice now silenced forever.

Venture further into the depths of Belmarsh and you will find the most isolated place within its walls: Healthcare, or “Hellcare” as its inhabitants lovingly call it. Here, you will marvel at sensible rules designed for everyone’s safety, such as the prohibition of chess, whilst permitting the far less dangerous game of checkers.

Deep within Hellcare lies the most gloriously uplifting place in all of Belmarsh, nay, the whole of the United Kingdom: the sublimely named Belmarsh End of Life Suite. Listen closely, and you may hear the prisoners’ cries of “Brother, I’m going to die in here”, a testament to the quality of both life and death within your prison.

But fear not, for there is beauty to be found within these walls. Feast your eyes upon the picturesque crows nesting in the razor wire and the hundreds of hungry rats that call Belmarsh home. And if you come in the spring, you may even catch a glimpse of the ducklings laid by wayward mallards within the prison grounds. But don’t delay, for the ravenous rats ensure their lives are fleeting.

I implore you, King Charles, to visit His Majesty’s Prison Belmarsh, for it is an honour befitting a king. As you embark upon your reign, may you always remember the words of the King James Bible: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7). And may mercy be the guiding light of your kingdom, both within and without the walls of Belmarsh.

Your most devoted subject,

Julian Assange

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Featured image: Julian Assange in Belmarsh Prison in 2019 (Source: WSWS)

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