

The West Is Failing Julian Assange

By [Stefania Maurizi](#)

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[Media Disinformation](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

Let's start with the cat. You never would have thought one of these beloved felines would play a crucial role in the Julian Assange case, would you? And yet look at the latest press coverage. The mainstream media's [headlines](#) weren't about a man who has been confined to a tiny building in the heart of Europe for the last six years with no end insight, they were about orders from Quito to feed his cat. There you have a man who is at serious risk of being arrested by the UK authorities, extradited to the U.S. and prosecuted for his publications. A man who has been cut off from any human contact, with the exception of his lawyers, and whose health is seriously declining due to prolonged confinement without even an hour outdoors. Considering this framework, wasn't there anything more serious to cover than the cat?

But there's a story to be told behind Assange's cat. One of the last times I was allowed to visit Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, before the current government of Lenin Moreno cut off all his social and professional contacts, I asked the founder of WikiLeaks whether his cat had ever tried to escape from the embassy given that, unlike his human companion, he can easily sneak out of the building without the risk of being arrested by Scotland Yard.

Assange didn't take my question with the lightness with which it was intended, quite the opposite, he became a bit emotional and told me that when the cat was small, it had in fact made some attempts to escape from the building, but as it had grown, it had become so accustomed to confinement that whenever Assange had tried to give the cat to some close friends so the animal could enjoy its freedom, it showed fear of wide open spaces. Confinement has a deep impact on the behavior and health of all creatures, animal and human.

Strength

I have worked as a WikiLeaks media partner for the last nine years, and over these nine years I have met Assange many, many times, but only once did I meet him as a free man: that was back in September 2010, the very same day the Swedish prosecutor issued an arrest warrant for allegations of rape. Initially he was under house arrest with an electronic bracelet around his ankle, then he entered the Ecuadorian embassy in London on June 19, 2012. Since then he has remained buried in that tiny embassy: a depressing building, very small, with no sunlight, no fresh air, no hour outdoors. In my country, Italy, even mafia bosses who strangled a child and dissolved his corpse in a barrel of acid enjoy an hour outdoors. Assange doesn't.

In these last eight years, I have never heard Julian Assange complain even once: at least in

my presence, he has always reacted to the enormous stress he has been under with strength and whenever I have contacted his mother, Christine Assange, she has never wished to discuss the details of her personal feelings and concerns about the conditions of her son.

Ny Marianne

AP 131426 10
1646 132

Från: Close Paul
Skickat: den 13 januari 2011 19:24
Till: Löfgren Ola
Kopia: Ny Marianne
Ämne: FW: Assange
Bifogade filer: Assange Provisional Skeleton Argument.pdf

Dear Ola and Marianne,

I attach an electronic version of the defence's skeleton argument, which I have now been able to obtain.

I thought you may wish to consider the contents now and to see the general issues which are being raised. Obviously I am still awaiting details of the defence experts' evidence. These statements are overdue and I understand should be sent to me by next Thursday.

I will be writing further to you [tomorrow] to deal with the various miscellaneous points and issues which have arisen and, in particular, with the specific points which were raised by Ola during a recent telephone discussion.

Hopefully many of the assertions can be dealt with quite easily and quickly.

The defence has published its skeleton arguments [as attached]. I confirm that I have NOT done so with the prosecution documents and do not intend to do so.

The defence has also sent a bundle of various documents to me but none is really new or needs your detailed consideration. I will send on any which may be of interest to you.

I am sorry to be dealing with the issues on a piecemeal basis. It is simply amazing how much work this case is generating. It sometimes seems like an industry. It is certainly non stop. Please do not think that the case is being dealt with as just another extradition request.

Kind Regards,

Paul

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lawful business purposes. Communications using these systems will also be monitored
and may be recorded to secure effective operation and for other lawful business purposes.

But for all his strength, this harsh situation is seriously undermining Assange's physical and mental health. In an [op-ed](#) in *The Guardian* last January, three respected physicians, Sondra S. Crosby, Chris Chisholm and Sean Love, tried to draw attention to this problem, yet nothing has changed. Assange remains buried in the embassy in extremely precarious

conditions due to the complete lack of cooperation from the UK authorities which have always refused to offer him safe passage to enjoy his asylum in Ecuador.

This lack of cooperation from the UK authorities – which can be reasonably interpreted as a deliberate effort to make Assange feel helpless, to break him down, so he'll step out of the embassy and they can arrest him – has helped create this Catch-22 situation, with Ecuador attempting various options to find a solution, like giving Assange diplomatic status so he can leave the embassy protected by diplomatic immunity. But at the end of the day there is very little a small country like Ecuador can do, and with Lenin Moreno in power, Ecuador's interest in protecting Assange seems to be fading to the extent that Ecuador is considering stripping Assange of his Ecuadorian citizenship, one of the most important shields protecting the WikiLeaks founder from extradition to the U.S..

The UK's Special Interest?

Having spent the last 3 years fighting in four jurisdictions – Sweden, the UK, Australia and the U.S. – to access the full documentation on the Assange and WikiLeaks case under FOIA, I have acquired a few documents which leave no doubt as to the role played by UK authorities in contributing to create the legal and diplomatic quagmire which is keeping Assange confined to the embassy. Why have the UK authorities done this? What special interest, if any, do they have in the Assange case?

AM 131226-10
Mun 124

Ny Marianne

Från: Close Paul
Skickat: den 25 januari 2011 17:36
Till: Löfgren Ola
Kopia: Ny Marianne
Ämne: FW: THE EXTRADITION OF JULIAN ASSANGE TO SWEDEN. ** UPDATE ** 1 of 2.

Dear Ola,

I have been waiting patiently for the outstanding defence documents, which are now long overdue, before sending a substantive reply and advice to you. I had hoped to set out all the details and the requests for any further information in one document.

The defence has said it will send the pending documents to me by tomorrow (Wednesday). I will of course contact you as soon as the solicitors do so.

My earlier advice remains, that in my view it would not be prudent for the Swedish authorities to try to interview the defendant in the UK. Such an interview would need to be pursuant to a letter of request [as it is an attempt to gather evidence rather than an exercise merely to obtain information or intelligence]. Even if the defendant was to consent to such an interview [by appointment] on a mutually agreed basis, the defence would without any doubt seek to turn the event to its advantage.

It would inevitably allege it was conclusive proof that the Swedish authorities had no case whatsoever against him and hence the interview was in the hope that he would make a full and frank confession. He would of course have no obligation [under English law] to answer any questions put to him. Any attempt to interview him under strict Swedish law would invariably be fraught with problems.

General experience has also shown that attempts by foreign authorities to interview a defendant in the UK, frequently leads to the defence retort that that some inducements or threats were made by the interviewers [such as the prosecutors' approach to bail on the defendant's surrender to the foreign state]. Thus I suggest you interview him only on his surrender to Sweden and in accordance with Swedish law.

As we have discussed your prosecution is well based on the existing evidence and is sufficient to proceed to trial, which is the prosecution's intention.

You have the evidence of the complainants.

We may need to put our response to the basic points raised by the defence on a clear, simple footing. These are essentially that Marianne Ny can issue a European Arrest Warrant and the Swedish authorities actually still do want to prosecute the defendant [for the Swedish offences set out in the EAW].

I will scan a letter, just received from the defence solicitors, to you very shortly. I will send a further substantive advice following receipt of the outstanding defence documents. I will also advise as to the format and content of any Swedish response. Hopefully we can, as I have mentioned, try to use one comprehensive response to deal with all the issues.

Kind Regards,

Paul.

From: Löfgren Ola [mailto:
Sent: 21 January 2011 13:11
To: Close Paul

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I mention a "special interest" because documents reveal that from the very beginning of the Swedish case, the UK authorities advised the Swedish prosecutors against the only investigative strategy that could have led to a quick solution of the preliminary investigation against Assange: questioning the WikiLeaks founder in London rather than extraditing him to Stockholm. It was this decision to insist on extradition at all costs that led the Australian to take refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy, fighting tooth and nail, convinced that if extradited to Sweden he could end up extradited to the U.S.

Documents reveal that the UK authorities referred to the Assange case as not an ordinary

one from the very beginning.

“Please do not think that the case is being dealt with as just another extradition request,” they wrote on January 13, 2011 to the Swedish prosecutors.

A few months later, a UK official added:

“I do not believe anything like this has ever happened, either in terms of speed or in the informal nature of the procedures. I suppose this case never ceases to amaze.”

What is special about this case? And why did the UK authorities keep insisting on extradition at all costs?

At some point even the Swedish prosecutors seemed to express doubts about the legal strategy advocated by their UK counterpart. Emails between UK and Swedish authorities I have obtained under FOIA show that in 2013 Sweden was ready to withdraw the European Arrest Warrant in light of the judicial and diplomatic paralysis the request for extradition had created. But the UK did not agree with lifting the arrest warrant: the legal case dragged on for another four years, when finally on the May 19, 2017, Sweden dropped its investigation after Swedish prosecutors had [questioned](#) Assange in London, as he had always asked.

Although the Swedish probe was ultimately terminated, Assange remains confined. No matter that the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention [established](#) that the WikiLeaks founder has been arbitrarily detained since 2010, and that he should be freed and compensated. The UK, which encourages other states to respect international law, doesn't care about the decision by this UN body whose opinions are respected by the European Court of Human Rights. After trying to appeal the UN decision and losing the appeal, Britain is simply ignoring it. There is no end in sight to Assange's arbitrary detention.

Silence and Suspicion

There are two more suspicious elements: the fact that the UK authorities destroyed the emails regarding the Assange case, as they admitted in my litigation before the UK Tribunal, and the fact that they have always refused to provide me with any information as to whether they have communicated with the U.S. authorities on the Assange case, because they sustain that confirming or denying it would tip Assange off as to the existence or non of an extradition request from the U.S..

From: Ny Marianne [Marianne.Ny@aklagare.se]
Sent: 14 December 2011 19:43
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: SV: re JULIAN ASSANGE

Thanks, I am glad to hear everything is alright. I am not surprised that it is nonstop work. I hope the holidays will give you a well-earned break. I will be off duty next week but Karin and Ola will be on duty and we will keep in touch. I am quite excited to see what will happen next Monday. If needed I will get back to office and please don't hesitate to call me or send email to my private address [REDACTED]
Marianne

Från: [REDACTED]@cps.gsi.gov.uk]
Skickat: den 13 december 2011 14:30
Till: Ny Marianne
Ämne: re JULIAN ASSANGE

Marianne,

No problems, just to say hello and that all is in hand. This should be a fairly quiet time on Assange but amazingly it is simply nonstop work.

I am still waiting for the defence application to the Supreme Court for leave to appeal. This must be made by close of play next Monday. I have been trying to ensure the defence serve me with details as soon as possible and do not leave it to the last moment, with the intention of ensuring I cannot respond in time and so ensuring the matter is not determined by the court until well into next year.

Suffice it to say I have been rather busy trying to outflank the defence and to spoil their plans. They may still have the last say in that if they do delay then there is nothing I can do to stop them. [The Extradition Act 2003 gives them 14 days]. I can though suggest subtly that such an act gross discourtesy to the Supreme Court may put them, their counsel and their case in a rather poor light with the court.

[REDACTED]

What I can say is that following the most extensive contact with the Supreme Court it has confirmed that the Justices will sit next Monday or, more accurately, will decide the application that day and also announce its decision [probably at about 6 pm GMT]. This will involve the justices working from various locations on Monday and their decision will be given by telephone.

I do not believe anything like this has ever happened, either in terms of speed or in the informal nature of the procedures. I suppose this case never ceases to amaze.

If leave is given then the court will list the appeal for hearing before the full court on 1 and 2 February 2012. Again, this speed and approach by the court are simply unheard of and that is why I am doing absolutely everything possible to ensure we can get the court to decide the question of leave on Monday.

If leave is refused then he will try to get interim relief from Strasbourg. It normally decides within 14 days. However with the Christmas/New Year break it is not possible to say how soon it will respond. I will keep you posted.

15/12/2011

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If there is or will be an extradition request from the U.S., the UK authorities want to be able to extradite Julian Assange for his publications just like any other criminal.

The risk of an editor or publisher being extradited for his publications should raise red flags and public debate in our democratic societies, yet we don't see any debate at all.

Julian Assange's situation is very precarious. His living conditions within the embassy have become unsustainable, and his friends speak as if there is no hope: "When the U.S. gets Julian", they say, as if it is a foregone conclusion that the U.S. will get him and no journalist,

no media, no NGO, no press association will do anything to prevent it.

In the last six years that Assange has been languishing in the embassy, not a single major Western media has dared to say: we shouldn't keep an individual confined with no end in sight. This treatment of Julian Assange by the UK – and, more in general, by the West – is not only inhumane, but counterproductive.

In these years, the Russian state-funded network RT has continued to cover the Assange case intensely. It isn't hard to understand why Russia is so ecstatic about the Assange case. The case provides Russia with the evidence to affirm that while the West is always preaching freedom of the press and aggressive journalism, it in fact crushes journalists and journalistic sources who expose state abuse at the highest levels. Chelsea Manning spent seven years in prison, Edward Snowden was forced to leave his country and seek asylum in Russia, Julian Assange has spent the last six years confined to a tiny building and in seriously deteriorating health. It's time to stop this persecution.

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Stefania Maurizi works for the Italian daily [La Repubblica](#) as an investigative journalist, after ten years working for the Italian newsmagazine l'Espresso. She has worked on all WikiLeaks releases of secret documents, and partnered with Glenn Greenwald to reveal the Snowden files about Italy. She has also interviewed A.Q. Khan, the father of the Pakistani atomic bomb, revealed the condolence payment agreement between the US government and the family of the Italian aid worker Giovanni Lo Porto killed in a US drone strike, and investigated the harsh working conditions of Pakistani workers in a major Italian garment factory in Karachi. She has started a multi-jurisdictional FOIA litigation effort to defend the right of the press to access the full set of documents on the Julian Assange and WikiLeaks case. She authored two books: Dossier WikiLeaks. Segreti Italiani and Una Bomba, Dieci Storie, the latter translated into Japanese. She can be reached at stefania.maurizi@riseup.net

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