

# Time Must Not be Allowed to Run Out on Julian Assange

Review of *Guilty of Journalism* by Kevin Gosztola

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*Despite whatever charges Julian Assange may be accused of, it is well known that the WikiLeaks publisher was targeted for exposing the war crimes of the US government. In an upside-down Bizarro World, the screws are being ever so gradually tightened on Assange by the war criminals and their criminal accomplices. It is, in fact, a slow-motion assassination being played out before the open and closed eyes of the world. — “[The Slow-motion Assassination of Julian Assange](#)”*

The above was written in 2020. Little has changed. In the foreword to *Guilty of Journalism* by Kevin Gosztola, American journalist Abby Martin writes, “Assange was only publishing the leaks. He never committed any crime. He only published evidence of the crimes.” (p xiii)

Assange's “crime” is exposing the crimes of the US; especially revelatory was the [Collateral Murder video](#) where US troops in an Apache helicopter gleefully gunned dead 12 civilians on a street in New Baghdad. The murderers remain scot-free. For exposing war crimes, Assange and Chelsea Manning have been punished.

Kevin Gosztola who has followed much of the judicial proceedings against Manning and Assange presents his knowledge of the cases, in particular that of Assange, in *Guilty of Journalism: The Political Case against Julian Assange* (Seven Stories Press, 2023).

What is readily apparent is that the releases by *WikiLeaks* triggered a tsunamic vendetta. This has resulted in a brazen miscarriage of justice manipulated by a red-faced United States with the connivance of allied nation states such as Australia; Sweden; Britain; after a change of presidents, Ecuador; and the bystander nations of the world.

The US seeks to try Assange under the Espionage Act, a relic from WWI designed to control the release of information (see chapter 4). Yet, such a prosecution of Assange is hampered by the US Constitution, as the First Amendment protects the freedom of the press. Prosecuting a publisher/journalist would entail grave implications for journalism and publishing in the US.

The book's title, *Guilty of Journalism*, is apt. It speaks to the legal perturbations to eliminate a perceived threat to the US's full-spectrum hegemony. For a hegemon to operate unhindered, it must control the medium and its messages. Thus, the US asserts that Assange is not a journalist, this despite Assange being recognized as a journalist by the US-based Committee to Protect Journalists, being a member of the International Federation of Journalists, being published in several media around the world, and having been awarded several prizes for his journalism. It is akin to blithely stating someone is not a lawyer despite having a law degree from a recognized law school, having passed the bar exam, having worked as a lawyer for several years, and having been celebrated for her accomplishments as a lawyer. It is patently a *non sequitur* to reject evidence purely on someone's say-so.

The US government prefers to keep its sordid business in some dark corner under wraps. Assange and *WikiLeaks*, however, cast a light on the inner workings of governments. Many people hold a principle that states the people have a [right to know](#) what their governments are doing in their name.

The US persists in its claim that Assange is not a journalist. He is depicted variously as an anarchist or a hacker posing as a journalist. Ponder this: if a teacher hacks computer systems at home in the evening, is she no longer a teacher? Nonetheless, *WikiLeaks* publishes journalism and the monopoly media (Gosztola uses the term "prestige media" in his book) has even indulged in publication of the *WikiLeaks*'s releases.

The US also holds that Assange is guilty of "aiding the enemy" and asserts that the information published by *WikiLeaks* would be used by enemies such as Al Qaeda.

Gosztola quotes Assange's civilian defense attorney David Coombs: "No case has ever been prosecuted under this type of theory, that an individual by nature of giving information to a journalistic organization would then be subject to [aiding the enemy]." (p 51)

There seems to be a causal link missing in the chain of the US legal strategy: if the US personnel had not been committing undeniable war crimes, then there would have been no story to be published about it in the media. No war crimes, no story, then no need to fear alleged succor being provided to an enemy. A question then: who is primarily culpable in this chain of events?

Harvard professor Yochai Benkler found that there was no evidence "that any enemy had, in fact, used *WikiLeaks*." (p 57) Nonetheless, Gosztola noted that judge Colleen Kollar-Kotelly had eased the burden of proof for prosecutors with her ruling that they need not show that information could potentially damage the US. (p 66)

Gosztola writes, “It does not matter who received the information. It does not matter if damage occurred as a result of the disclosure or publication of the information. It is all the same to DOJ prosecutors.” (p 79)

*WikiLeaks* was branded a “non-state hostile intelligence service” by then director of the Central Intelligence Agency Mike Pompeo. (p 87) One ought to consider the nature of the organization previously headed by Pompeo vis-à-vis *WikiLeaks*. Douglas Valentine wrote a book that lays out what the CIA is: [\*The CIA as Organized Crime: How Illegal Operations Corrupt America and the World\*](#). Sounds an awful lot like the pot calling the kettle black; except *WikiLeaks* is no kettle. “[WikiLeaks has a perfect in document authentication and resistance to all censorship attempts.](#)”

Besides, some might consider any claims by [a character such as Pompeo](#) to be rich given that [he once chuckled](#): “I was the CIA director. We lied, we cheated, we stole.”

A question: “[Who to Believe: The CIA and Corporate Media or WikiLeaks?](#)”

The criminality of the US government is such that its intelligence services considered assassinating Assange; spied on him while in asylum; relied on the testimony of a sociopath — Sigurdur Ingi Thordarson, known for engaging in sex with underage boys — to fraudulently smear Assange; subpoenaed witnesses to appear before the fishing expeditions of a grand jury (for which Chelsea Manning was again imprisoned and fined daily for refusing to testify). They even deprived Assange of his razor so that when he was hauled out of the Ecuadorian embassy he appeared with an unkempt beard. (p 107)

If only stolen razors were the extent of the criminality of the US authorities, but Gosztola brings to light additional crimes in chapter 9: “Retaliation for Exposing Torture, Rendition, and War Crimes.” *Guilty of Journalism* seamlessly segues into the next chapter detailing what happens to those brave souls who expose the rampant criminality of the state. The US prison system, to be generous, is sorely lacking in decency for the humanity, health, and sanity of those housed within its walls.

Gosztola examines the behavior of the moneyed media and its lies of omission and commission. Assange and *WikiLeaks* were heavily criticized for putting lives at risk, but: “Notably, *WikiLeaks* never called attention to any names in the war logs, but prestige media did so, as they helped the US government stir panic, which distracted from the contents of the historical records.” (p 206)

Media allegations lacked evidence, and later the entire fiasco would morph into the prestige media’s discredited Russiagate conspiracy. (ch 13)

Currently, Assange finds himself still incarcerated in the maximum security Belmarsh Prison in southeast London awaiting the outcome of an appeal against extradition to the US, where the deck will be stacked against him should he be sent there. In the US, Assange will be charged under the Espionage Act which, in actuality, is a contrived criminal indictment for exposing criminal acts.

Assange is one man, one man who has had the might of the American government and the supporting machinery of several nation states, who feel aggrieved and antagonized by the media exposures in *WikiLeaks*, arrayed against him. Assange is not alone. He is beloved by family and friends; he is backed by colleagues in *WikiLeaks*; he is vital to the readers of

WikiLeaks missives; and he is supported by many independent media, attested to by *Guilty of Journalism*.

The irony and perversity of the vicious web in which Assange is entangled is laid bare in *Guilty of Journalism*. People who care about access to information, who want their governments to honor their constitutions and operate transparently, and who care about justice ought to read *Guilty of Journalism*, become further informed, and add their voices to justice for Julian Assange and to all the others who have sacrificed themselves to bring to light the corruption and crimes of governmental nexuses and the complicit prestige media.

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