

US Imperialism Defeated: UK Court Blocks Extradition of Julian Assange

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Today at the Old Bailey in London [Judge Vanessa Baraitser ruled](#) that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange should not be extradited to the United States. The judge sided with all of the American claims against Assange. However, she justified her decision on the grounds that Assange would be a suicide risk if he were extradited to the US due to the horrendous conditions in their supermax prisons.

Journalist [John Pilger](#) has pointed out that this decision does not reflect how fair the British justice system is. Rather, the judge, faced with evidence that Assange has been spied upon in the Ecuadorian embassy and therefore not received a fair trial, used a legal technicality to save face. Pilger notes:

“This is wonderful! It’s a face saving cover for the British to justify their disgraceful political trial of Assange on America’s behalf.”

On Wednesday the judge will rule on whether Assange can be released on bail while he awaits the US appeal. Of course, the US Department of Justice will argue that Assange should remain in Belmarsh maximum security prison until the appeal hearing takes place.

We should celebrate this defeat of the American Empire but remember that this was not a victory for press freedom. Pulitzer prize winning journalist [Glenn Greenwald](#) has observed:

“This wasn’t a victory for press freedom. Quite the contrary: the judge made clear she believed there are grounds to prosecute Assange in connection with the 2010 publication.”

The [Defend Assange campaign](#) has summarised the 118 page opinion of the judge in which she sided with the US prosecution on every key issue:

“The judge ruled:

- The U.K. Extradition Act should take precedence over the U.S.-U.K. Extradition Treaty, and the former removed the clause barring extradition for political offences
- The charges against Assange in the U.S. would be considered offences in the U.S.
- Assange’s conduct “went beyond that of a journalist” in agreeing to help Chelsea Manning crack a password and in telling her that “curious eyes never run dry,” encouraging her to leak more files
- The release of unredacted cables was “indiscriminate”

- Defence arguments about Assange's political opinions were "extraneous"
- There was insufficient evidence that the charges were "pressurized" by the Trump Administration and instead showed healthy internal debate
- Though the intelligence community has harshly criticized WikiLeaks, it doesn't speak for the administration
- It isn't the UK court's place to comment on the case of UC Global spying on Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy, as it doesn't have access to court documents in the case against UC Global in Spain
- Assange's prospective jury pool in the Eastern District of Virginia would come from a large county, can't prove it would only be ex-national security and ex-military officials
- Challenges of the U.S. prosecution's "over broadness" and "vagueness" should be made in a U.S. court, not adjudicated here, no reason to think Assange wouldn't have constitutional rights when tried in the U.S. — "This court trusts that a US court will properly consider Mr Assange's constitutional right to free speech"
- On whether it would be oppressive to extradite: I accepted Prof Kopelman opinion that Mr Assange suffers from a recurrent depressive disorder, that Assange has suicidal ideation, and would be 'single-minded' in attempt to end his life
- Potential conditions in a US prison: CIA views Assange as hostile, still a security risk; Assange likely to be sent to ADX Florence, would be held in serious isolation
- The purpose of Special Administrative Measures is to minimize communications, and prisoners have extreme limitations. These conditions were considered by all experts to have deleterious impact on Assange's mental health
- Mr Assange has the intellect and determination to follow through with suicidal ideation
- Therefore I rule it would be unjust to extradite Mr Assange. The US has the right to appeal."

During the extradition trial the defence lawyers for Assange presented compelling evidence against all of the key points of the US prosecution mentioned above.

This setback for the United States will not stop it from pursuing future whistle blowers who expose its war crimes. Under the new Biden administration the endless regime change wars will continue as American imperialism attempts to achieve its goal of full spectrum dominance over the world. Still, this is an embarrassing defeat for the American Empire which will not be reported in any detail by the corporate media.

We should celebrate this victory for journalist Julian Assange who has shown great courage in standing up to the psychological torture imposed on him by a collection of governments led by the US and UK.

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