

# John Pilger and Julian Burnside denounce silencing of WikiLeaks' Julian Assange

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More than two weeks have now passed since the Ecuadorian government of President Lenin Moreno made the decision to shut off WikiLeaks founder and publisher Julian Assange from the outside world by cutting his access to the Internet, cell phone and visitors.

For the last six years, Assange has been confined to Ecuador's embassy in London, where he was granted political asylum to avoid extradition to Sweden on trumped-up sexual assault allegations and ultimately to the United States, which is seeking to prosecute him for publishing documents that exposed war crimes.

Under pressure from the United States and its imperialist allies, which are preparing to launch a new war in Syria that could result in a direct conflict with nuclear-armed Russia, Ecuador cut Assange off from the Internet under the pretext that he was interfering in the politics of other countries. Silencing dissidents and those who question the official narrative has always been critical for the ruling elites in the lead-up to the launching of new wars.

The censorship of Assange has been met with an approving silence from the mainstream media, the pseudo-left and many human rights organizations. Very few in these upper- and middle-class circles have found it necessary or beneficial to stand up for the rights of the publisher and journalist.

Among those who have had the courage to speak out are documentary filmmaker and journalist John Pilger and barrister Julian Burnside, an Australian human rights and refugee advocate. They have written to the WSWs to denounce the silencing of Assange and demand the end to his persecution by the United States and its imperialist allies.

**John Pilger**

"The United States, France and Britain appear to be

on the brink of using their military power with breathtaking recklessness. An attack on Syria that further provokes Russia beckons world war. Yet, there is a malign silence, or the mantra of propaganda as news. Look below the surface and the evidence points to a traditional 'black ops' campaign in collusion with or supported by the media, especially the 'respectable' liberal media. A strikingly similar campaign led to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, to the subsequent invasions of Libya and Syria, and the overthrow of the elected government in Ukraine.

"The difference today is the intimidation of almost all 'mainstream' dissent, the silencing of the few in newspapers and broadcast media. In my career as a journalist I have never known anything like it. I would call it a war on journalism, waged not by sinister purveyors of fake news but by the very institutions that claim journalism's highest mantle.

"The most unbowed and courageous dissenters are WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange. Remarkably, in spite of a vituperative smear campaign against him, Assange and WikiLeaks have continued to lift the rocks of criminal power and expose the lies that have sent hundreds of thousands to their deaths, along with the ties that bind organised jihadism with the likes of Hillary Clinton.

"This is true journalism: telling the public what its rulers do behind their backs: calling great power to account without fear or favour. Of course, for those who walk on both sides of the street, who simultaneously snipe at and collaborate with corrupt power yet persist in describing themselves as 'left' or as independent 'humanitarian' agencies, Assange's courage is shaming. For the rest of us, it is an inspiration."

**Julian Burnside**

“It is disturbing that Julian Assange has now been prevented from accessing the internet.

“It is important to remember that America has been at the forefront of the campaign against Assange, since WikiLeaks published the Collateral Murder vision. It is also important to remember that Collateral Murder and other WikiLeaks publications have been seen by hundreds of millions of people because they have been republished by the mainstream press across the world.

“No one in the mainstream media has been hounded the way Assange has been. There is not a shred of evidence that Assange has done anything but publish material: just as the mainstream media do every day.

“Perhaps the Murdoch press should have their access to the internet cut, and we would see a genuine democratic response to the utterly undemocratic treatment of Assange.”



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