

# Julian Assange's fiancé calls on the Australian government to secure his freedom

Oscar Grenfell  
22 June 2020

Stella Moris, the fiancé of Julian Assange and mother of his two young children, issued a powerful call last night for the Australian government to secure the WikiLeaks founder's freedom and prevent his extradition to the US, where he faces life imprisonment for exposing American war crimes.

Moris was featured on Channel Nine's "60 Minutes" program. The 24-minute segment provided an objective account of Assange's decade-long arbitrary detention, first in Ecuador's London embassy where he was a political refugee, and since April 2019 in the maximum-security Belmarsh Prison.

The program, presented by Tara Brown, was the first substantive examination of Assange's plight by the Australian media since the coronavirus pandemic began.

Despite the fact that he is an Australian journalist being persecuted by the most powerful governments in the world for his publishing activities, corporate media outlets have maintained an effective D-notice on Assange for more than three months. This has dovetailed with the refusal of the Australian government, the Labor opposition and all of the official parties to defend the WikiLeaks founder.

Moris warned that Assange's incarceration in Belmarsh, which she noted has been dubbed the "UK's Guantanamo Bay," is exacerbating physical and psychological health issues stemming from his protracted persecution.

"He's very unwell and I'm very concerned for his ability to survive this," she said. "Now he's in the UK's worst prison. It's a high-security prison. One in five prisoners are murderers. He shouldn't be there. He's not a criminal, he's not a dangerous person, he's a gentle intellectual thinker and a journalist. Those people are not the people who belong in prison."

Moris stated that she was "very worried" about Assange's circumstances. She has been unable to visit him since February, as a result of coronavirus lockdown measures. Despite widespread infections throughout the British penitentiary system, including in Belmarsh, and Assange's vulnerability to the virus as a result of a chronic lung condition, he has been refused bail.

"If you're separated from your family and you're alone in a tiny, dark room for 23-hours a day, with no control over your surroundings, I think people can imagine what that is like," Moris said.

Brown stated that in such circumstances, "most people would probably go mad." Moris responded: "I think any person would get very severely depressed and he is very depressed." "60 Minutes" showed Moris and her two young children speaking with Assange on the phone. The older of the two asked Assange when he was coming home.

Moris, a 37-year-old lawyer, recounted the circumstances of her relationship with Assange. They had grown close when she was working on his legal cases after he had successfully sought political asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy.

When the couple's two children were born in 2017 and 2018, the new Ecuadorian government had initiated closer relations with the US and was increasingly hostile to Assange. UC Global, a Spanish firm contracted to manage the embassy's security, was surveilling every aspect of Assange's life and was passing the material gathered to the US Central Intelligence Agency.

When she fell pregnant, Moris informed Assange by writing the news on a piece of paper. They were fearful that any conversation about their personal life would be picked up by the audio recording devices placed

throughout the embassy by UC Global. Moris sought to hide her pregnancies from the embassy staff and after the children were born, a friend of Assange pretended to be their father and brought them to the embassy.

“The real issue was I thought that our family would be targeted by the same people that were trying to harm Julian,” Moris stated. The program featured news clips of senior US government figures denouncing Assange in hysterical terms and calling for him to be silenced. Moris noted that UC Global had considered stealing the diaper of one of her children to confirm his paternity, and had even discussed plans to kill Assange or allow American agents to kidnap him.

Moris commented that it would be difficult for many people to appreciate the lawlessness that had characterised Assange’s persecution. “There’s incredible criminality that has been going on in order to gather information about Julian’s lawyers, and his family, and journalists who were visiting him,” she said. “I’ve been in a permanent state of fear for years and now it’s slowly playing out.”

Significantly, the politically-motivated character of Swedish sexual misconduct allegations against Assange was made clear in the program. The allegations were concocted by that country’s police and judiciary, in the midst of a frenzied US campaign against WikiLeaks’ exposure of war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Brown noted that Assange had never been charged with a crime in Sweden, and that the Swedish investigation had been dropped. Australian independent parliamentarian Andrew Wilkie pointed out that documents had shown that the British government used the allegations to enforce Assange’s arbitrary detention in the Ecuadorian embassy. The British authorities had been aware that the Swedish claims were a smokescreen for plans to dispatch Assange to his US persecutors.

The program concluded with an appeal from Moris to the Australian government. She said: “I want people to understand that we’re being punished as a family. It’s not just Julian in the prison. The kids are being deprived of their father. I need Julian and he needs me.”

Moris declared: “I’d like to ask [Australian Prime Minister] Scott Morrison to do everything he can to get Julian back to his family. If Australia doesn’t step in I’m very fearful this wrong won’t be righted. It’s a

nightmare.”

Tellingly, Brown stated that Morrison, Foreign Minister Marise Payne and Christian Porter refused to be interviewed.

This was in line with the ten-year collaboration of Australian governments in the US-led vendetta against Assange. Beginning with the Greens-backed Labor government of Julia Gillard, they have rejected calls to defend the WikiLeaks’ founder, instead participating in the campaign against him.

The official hostility to Assange is bound up with the Australian ruling elite’s unconditional support for the US military alliance and all of American imperialism’s illegal wars and military preparations and dovetails with a domestic assault on democratic rights, including attacks on press freedom and laws increasing punishments for whistleblowers. It is facilitated by the refusal of the Greens, the pseudo-left groups and the unions to mount any campaign for Assange’s rights.

This underscores the fact that the fight for Assange’s freedom and for the defence of all civil liberties requires the mobilisation of the working class. The international protests over recent weeks against police violence have demonstrated the objective basis for building such a movement.



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