

# US plotted Assange's "assassination, kidnap, rendering, poisoning"

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"This is the first time, of which we are aware, that the US has sought the assistance of a UK court in obtaining jurisdiction over someone where the evidence suggests it has contemplated, if not plotted, the assassination, kidnap, rendering, poisoning of that person."

These were the words of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's representative, Mark Summers QC, at the Royal Courts of Justice in London yesterday.

The US is seeking Assange's extradition to face charges under the Espionage Act which carry a life sentence for exposing a litany of state crimes, including war crimes and human rights abuses.

Throughout the years of proceedings, the central lie depended on by the prosecution has been that the US government is proceeding fairly through the proper channels to secure Assange's legal transfer, as in any other extradition case.

But, as Summers said yesterday, "nothing about this case is normal."

Assange is the subject of a massive multi-state manhunt aiming to punish him for his exposure of imperialist crimes against the world's people and silence him forever.

The US lawyers and UK courts have worked tirelessly to exclude or discount this reality, creating a fantasy world in the courtroom. Yesterday, in light of last month's revelations by *Yahoo! News* that the CIA discussed plans for Assange's murder, his lawyers tore this charade apart.

Summers explained, "This is a case where there is credible evidence of US governmental plans, developed at some length, to do serious harm to Mr Assange."

Referring to recently produced US assurances that Assange will be well treated in America, and US lawyer James Lewis QC's arguments that these should be taken "in good faith", Summers asked the High Court judges to "step back for one moment" and consider "the reality of

this case".

Summers directed them to the *Yahoo! News* investigation, "Kidnapping, assassination and a London shoot-out: Inside the CIA's secret war plans against WikiLeaks", which he explained gave "a proper understanding of what lengths the CIA have been prepared to go to in relation to Mr Assange."

Summarising the article, Summers said that WikiLeaks's "Vault 7" release of CIA electronic surveillance and cyber warfare tools "provoked what former US officials variously describe as 'a desire for revenge', 'fury', 'seeing blood', 'an obsession' and 'a desire for vengeance'".

It led to former US CIA Director and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo "designating WikiLeaks as a non-state hostile intelligence agency", granting the CIA additional powers to act against it, and "discussions about killing Mr Assange."

He continued, the "CIA discussed kidnapping him, rendering him back to America" and this "led to the placing into existence of charges so that there would be something in place in the event that they did render him to the USA."

Conversations between the CIA and UC Global, the company which provided security at the Ecuadorian embassy where Assange claimed asylum, involved "discussions of kidnapping and poisoning".

Summers concluded by saying "what is now known" is that the UC Global revelations discussed in the initial extradition hearing were "potentially the tip of the iceberg and the CIA's planning in relation to Mr Assange goes much, much deeper than that."

In reference to the conditions in the embassy, Summers's colleague Edward Fitzgerald QC referred to the "menacing, threatening and frightening situation" that confronted Assange and his family. This included "surveillance by UC Global, in cooperation with an

American agency, of Mr Assange... They were taking counsels' and solicitors' notes and photocopying them, seeking DNA from the nappies of [the children of Assange and his partner] Stella Moris, talking even of poisoning, killing or kidnapping Mr Assange."

These words damn the UK government and its judiciary as participants in a slow-motion assassination, playing out in plain sight, under only the thinnest veneer of pseudo-legality.

Even if the US cannot secure Assange's immediate and direct murder, they aim to achieve the same end by throwing him in the deepest hole the American legal system can dig.

The lawyers for the US suggested on Wednesday that assurances made by the US to the UK removed the possibility of his imprisonment under Special Administrative Measures, or in the ADX Florence prison in Colorado, which would entail extreme and torturous solitary confinement and isolation from the outside world. Summers countered on Thursday that these assurances are "conditional, qualified and aspirational" and can be withdrawn on the advice of agencies including the CIA.

Summers said that Assange's fate "is likely already sealed." He concluded, "The overwhelming likelihood is... it'll happen and it'll happen regardless of what the doctors say about isolation potentially leading to his death".

Speaking outside the court after the hearing, WikiLeaks editor-in-chief Kristinn Hrafnsson explained that Special Administrative Measures (SAMs) "basically means torture and for Julian in his condition, death... The judges here have only two choices. Basically, uphold the decision not to extradite Julian Assange or de facto give out a death sentence."

In an indication of the importance of this case to the UK, that decision has been handed to the highest judge in the land, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales Ian Burnett, Baron Burnett of Maldon. He is sitting in the case alongside Lord Justice Timothy Holroyde.

Their attitude to the naked criminality outlined by Summers and Fitzgerald was summarised by Holroyde's interjection, "I wouldn't have thought it a controversial position that the CIA and the American intelligence community would be intensely interested in Mr Assange."

Summers was forced to answer, "What they're prepared to do in relation to him is a different issue."

Holroyde intervened several times in the two days of the hearing to challenge arguments made by the defence and on one occasion seemed to openly endorse a prosecution

point.

Stella Moris said after the hearing, "This is a political persecution that has used the law, extradition law, as a tool to further its political agenda. To take revenge on a journalist. For what? For the publications that he is now indicted over. Publications that revealed war crimes, targeted assassinations, rendition, torture..."

"This US extradition case has been falling apart since the moment it started because it was born rotten. It was born at a time when the CIA was plotting to assassinate Julian. And it also proving to be devastating for the US in the courts. Not only because the US prison system and its inhumane conditions is exposed before these courts in its whole barbarity. But also because the crimes that have been undertaken by the US government against Julian are also exposed before these courts.

"Today we were able to air in court Mike Pompeo's plans, his 'sketches' and 'options' to assassinate Julian in London. To assassinate a journalist in this city for doing his job because he exposed their crimes."

It is not just the US case that is rotten, but every plank and pillar of bourgeois democracy, which can no longer even pretend to uphold the most basic legal and human rights. The persecution of Assange is the sharpest expression of the fact that class and geopolitical tensions are reaching such extreme levels that the world's governments are driven to adopt the methods of dictatorship, including political execution.

The High Court judges will now consider their decision, a due date for which has not yet been given. Every effort must be made to use this time for the construction of a mass defence campaign rooted in the only social force which can secure Assange's freedom in the face of such ruthless opponents, the international working class.



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