

Britain's High Court rules on United States extradition appeal: Assange must be handed to his assassins

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The UK's High Court has ruled that the United States government can extradite WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange to face life imprisonment in the US under the Espionage Act.

US authorities successfully brought a High Court challenge against a ruling in January by then-district judge Vanessa Baraitser that Assange should not be sent to the US because of his high risk of suicide.

Lord Burnett, sitting with Lord Justice Holroyde, did his duty to US and British imperialism, declaring Friday that there was no risk of suicide as the US had given "assurances" that Assange would not be held under highly oppressive prison conditions.

Assange is being sent to the country whose government and security services have been plotting to murder him. At a two-day appeal hearing in October, the High Court heard evidence from Assange's defence team of CIA plots to poison, kidnap and shoot Assange in London.

US diplomatic reassurances cited by the Justices in their ruling today are a cynical fraud. Their very wording offered the caveat that if Assange does something, at some future point, warranting solitary confinement in a maximum security facility, then all bets will be off.

The US Department of Justice, Pentagon and CIA are determined that Assange rots in jail for revealing their crimes. Assange faces 18 criminal charges for publishing thousands of classified files and diplomatic cables in 2010 exposing war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan that were responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people. The charges against Assange carry a sentence of up to 175 years in prison.

During October's appeal hearing, James Lewis QC,

speaking for the gangsters in the White House and Pentagon, stated that "binding" diplomatic assurances made by the US were a "solemn matter" and "are not dished out like smarties".

Four assurances sent in a Diplomatic Note dated February 5, 2021, claimed that Assange would not be submitted to special administrative measures (SAMs) and detained at the ADX Florence Supermax jail, that while in custody in the US he would receive "appropriate clinical and psychological treatment," and that the US would consent to Assange being transferred to Australia to serve any prison sentence he may be given.

Against all medical evidence, the US also insisted that Assange's mental illness "does not even come close" to being severe enough to rule out extradition.

To this pack of lies, Burnett just as solemnly intoned, "That risk [of suicide] is in our judgment excluded by the assurances which are offered. It follows that we are satisfied that, if the assurances had been before the judge [Baraitser], she would have answered the relevant question differently."

Assange's lawyers accurately described the US assurances as "meaningless" and "vague", explaining they did not remove the risk of "conditions of administrative isolation". His lawyers insisted Baraitser had acted in accordance with expert medical evidence regarding Assange's mental state when she ruled that the "special administrative measures" in which Assange would most likely be held would have a severe negative impact on his mental health.

Assange's legal team presented evidence at the two-day appeal of the "extreme measures of surveillance" against their client while being forced to seek refuge in

the Ecuadorean Embassy, emphasising “recent disclosures about CIA plans from the same period in time to seriously harm Julian Assange”. But this fell on deaf ears as a predetermined verdict, described by Assange’s fiancé Stella Moris as a “grave miscarriage of justice” was issued.

The two senior judges ordered the case should be returned to Westminster Magistrates’ Court, with a pro-forma direction that a district judge send the case to UK Home Secretary Priti Patel, a vicious right-winger who will deliver the coup de grace against Assange’s head.

Given this record it is by no means certain that Assange’s likely appeal to the Supreme Court will be allowed.

This was the intended outcome of Baraitser’s earlier ruling, which upheld the US case for extradition in its entirety, while accepting a “real” risk of suicide and blocking extradition solely on medical grounds.

Holroyde even rapped Baraitser across the knuckles for not notifying the US authorities of her “provisional” decision, thereby hampering their ability to give the assurances now provided.

The WSWS on October 27 described the US appeal challenging Baraitser’s ruling as “a legal abomination in pursuit of a heinous crime:

“Assange is being targeted for his and WikiLeaks’s exposure of war crimes, torture and other human rights abuses, mass surveillance, coup plots, and state corruption. The architects of these crimes, the US and other imperialist governments, are determined to extract a blood price, either through Assange’s life imprisonment and the destruction of his physical and mental health, or his murder.”

In September, *Yahoo! News* reported, based on conversations with more than 30 sources, that plans for Assange’s kidnap or killing were discussed at the “highest levels” of the CIA. One former official acknowledged that former CIA director and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo led the discussions. He said later that he “makes no apologies” for doing so.

Yesterday’s verdict is the culmination of a decade long effort to silence Assange, involving the US, British and Australian governments, assisted by Sweden and Ecuador.

Sweden helped organise a sting operation in August 2010, utilising false and entirely discredited allegations of sexual assault to seek Assange’s extradition, from

where he would have been sent on to the US. Ecuador withdrew Assange’s diplomatic immunity in April 2019, allowing a British police snatch squad to seize and imprison him in Belmarsh maximum security prison where he remains.

Washington and London could rely throughout on the active collusion of the *Guardian*, *New York Times* and the rest of the world’s media, which waged a campaign of denigration and slander that worsened by the year. Despite their belated discovery of the grave implications for press freedom posed by his prosecution and extradition, they paved the way for it.

The same holds true for Labour and various social democratic parties worldwide, including “lefts” such as Jeremy Corbyn, who placed their loyalty to imperialism and the rightist forces in their own party above all principled considerations. A myriad of pseudo-left tendencies joined CIA efforts to demonise Assange utilising bogus sex allegations and gender politics as an excuse for supporting the imperialist campaign to get Assange.

Today’s filthy court verdict will nevertheless be viewed by millions internationally as a legal travesty and a politically motivated crime. It will create the basis for mobilising the only social force that can genuinely free Julian Assange, the international working class, who regard Assange a hero for his fight to bring the imperialist warmongers to account.



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