

UK High Court orders Assange extradited: A pseudo-legal travesty

Thomas Scripps
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Yesterday's order by the UK High Court that WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange can be extradited to the United States is a disgusting travesty of justice.

The ruling is the outcome of a 10-year-long political conspiracy by the United States, the UK, Australia, and Sweden to persecute a courageous journalist who exposed the crimes carried out by the imperialist governments during the murderous invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Upholding an appeal made by the US government, Lord Burnett of Maldon, Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, and Lord Justice Holroyde ruled that the lower court ought to have afforded the US "the opportunity to offer assurances" about Assange's treatment. The judges accepted that the assurances now provided—by a state which, they were told in the appeal hearing, plotted Assange's "assassination, kidnap, rendering poisoning"—were "sufficient to meet the concerns" about his well-being.

With this judgement, the UK judiciary has laid bare its function as a compliant instrument of the British state, prepared to rubber-stamp a campaign of staggering criminality with devastating anti-democratic implications.

Assange's lawyers rubbished the US "assurances" as nothing of the sort, providing extensive evidence of his illegal targeting by the CIA, including a highly credible investigation by *Yahoo! News* and an ongoing criminal investigation in Spain that his kidnap and murder was planned at the highest levels of government.

The High Court referenced these arguments before ruling, "General statements of opinion calling into question the good faith of the USA from those who establish no relevant expertise to give such an opinion are of no more value than a journalistic opinion culled from an internet search."

The judges continued, "The reality is that this court is being invited to reject the USA's assurances either on the

basis that they are not offered in good faith or that they are for some other reason not capable of being accepted at face value. That is a serious allegation, particularly bearing in mind that the United Kingdom and the USA have a long history of cooperation in extradition matters..."

They conclude, "There is no reason why this court should not accept the assurances as meaning what they say."

In other words, the court was not in the slightest concerned with Assange's clearly abused legal and democratic rights, but with furthering the interests and relationship of British and American imperialism. It has now delivered a ruling which threatens the WikiLeaks founder with life imprisonment or death for exposing the war crimes and other atrocities of the ruling class and paves the way for a sweeping assault on free speech.

Assange's extradition could now be imminent. No confidence should be placed in his securing an appeal to the UK's Supreme Court or the European Court. The wheels of a 10-year rendition operation, which has seen Assange arbitrarily detained, spied on, stolen from, seized from a foreign embassy, stripped of his Ecuadorian asylum and citizenship, psychologically tortured, subject to vindictive sentences and held on remand without charge for years in a maximum-security prison, are once again in motion.

Even if an appeal is accepted, an exclusively legal path to freedom at best means Assange's continued imprisonment in Belmarsh under the same intolerable conditions he has now suffered for more than two-and-a-half years.

This fate was handed down by the High Court as Assange's persecutor-in-chief, President Joe Biden, hosted a "Summit for Democracy," attended by a gang of mass murderers including Rodrigo Duterte of the Philippines and Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, which

announced a \$3.5 million Journalism Protection Platform to “provide at-risk journalists with digital and physical security training, psychosocial care, legal aid, and other forms of assistance.”

In the UK on the same day, the House of Lords held a debate on the importance of freedom of speech which did not mention Assange once.

The vile hypocrisy of the US and British ruling class will not shock the broad mass of the population, which views its rotten governments with justly deserved contempt. The question they will be asking is not “How could they do this?” but “How could they get away with it?” and “What must be done to stop them?”

Any answer must begin with a serious political appraisal of events to this point. Until now, the fight for Assange’s freedom has been left in the hands of an official campaign centred on the pursuit of justice through the courts and appeals on this basis to the tired ranks of the labour bureaucracy and liberal and right-wing libertarian great and good. This perspective has proved disastrous.

Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs have been feted as among the foremost champions of Assange’s cause. But their support, limited to the last two years, has consisted of little more than concerned tweets, pleas to Prime Minister Boris Johnson and sermons on British justice. Corbyn’s single insipid tweet delivered seven hours after the judgement yesterday, “Julian Assange should not be extradited for revealing uncomfortable truths,” only drew attention to their inaction.

Similar store has been put in the 11th hour turn by the media to formally oppose Assange’s extradition. But the truth is that whatever hand-wringing editorials and opinion columns these organisations can bring themselves to publish, the sentiment in the editorial offices of the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* will be one of smirking satisfaction. They spent years paving the way for yesterday’s verdict. They will now hope that Assange, who threatened to upset their cosy relationship with their respective ruling classes, can at last be put out of mind.

It should be noted that the *Guardian* kept a report of the verdict, the most consequential in the history of journalism for half a century, on its front page for only a few hours before relegating it to an “Around the world” section way down the page, placed below “From the UK.”

The *Guardian* and company’s switch to token support for Assange came only once his case was safely confined to the court system, after they had spent years pursuing a

slander campaign designed to isolate him from the decisive factor in securing his freedom: the mass support for WikiLeaks in the global population.

Efforts to turn Assange into a pariah were variously supported or left unopposed by the organisations of the international pseudo-left. Among them was the UK group Counterfire, whose leading member John Rees now heads the Don’t Extradite Assange group. The official campaign’s entire orientation is to these current or former participants in the criminal enterprise against Assange, to a social layer which provides no constituency for democratic rights and the fight to defend them.

That fight depends on the international working class, which is coming into ever more open conflict with a capitalist social order on a forced march to dictatorship and war. A series of major strikes, often mounted in a direct opposition to the trade union bureaucracy’s efforts to impose company-authored contracts, mark a dramatic shift in the global situation since the campaign to silence Assange began.

The pandemic, the intensified exploitation of the working population to make good the windfall orchestrated by the oligarchy on a mountain of corpses, and the drive to war with nuclear armed powers Russia and China threatening millions more, are driving forward an escalating wave of class struggle.

It is to this enormous social force that the campaign to free Assange must turn. His cause must be made a watchword of the independent political movement of the working class now finding expression in the formation of rank-and-file committees across the globe. This movement will rally behind it all progressive social forces, including sections of the middle classes and professionals. The *World Socialist Web Site* and the Socialist Equality Parties will carry forward this struggle.



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