

UK Supreme Court refuses Julian Assange's appeal against extradition to US

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The UK Supreme Court has refused to hear WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's appeal against a High Court decision ordering his extradition to the United States to face charges under the Espionage Act. The case will now be sent to Home Secretary Priti Patel to give a final decision, barring further appeals by Assange's legal team.

Assange has four weeks to make submissions to Patel, which is equivalent to asking mercy of the Devil. He can also seek to cross-appeal the original Magistrates Court decision, which sided with the US government on every point bar one on medical grounds—now successfully overturned.

His lawyers outlined the basis for such an appeal last April, which stands as an indictment of the pseudo-legal charade the heroic journalist has been subjected to. They argue that Assange's extradition is being illegally sought for a political offence, barred by the US-UK Extradition Treaty; an abuse of due process; in breach of Article 3 (inhuman and degrading treatment), Article 5 (unfair detention), Article 6 (denial of fair trial), Article 7 (retroactive justice) and Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention on Human Rights; based on a misrepresentation of facts; and being pursued for ulterior political motives.

Assange's legal team have also indicated that they may pursue an appeal in the European Court of Human Rights.

Assange's life is in grave danger. Neither appeal is likely to be granted and not even such formal legal rights and processes to proceed should be considered a certainty. Assange's prosecution has always been the "legal" continuation of a lawless assassination-cum-rendition operation organised by the CIA, seeking to silence Assange for good, one way or another.

The timeline has now been dramatically accelerated.

The Supreme Court's decision came suddenly, without any prior announcement. That it refused even to hear Assange's case is highly unusual. The lower High Court certified on January 24 that a "point of law of public importance" had been raised by Assange, normally prompting the Supreme Court to consider the appeal.

The point of law in question was: "In what circumstances can an appellate court receive assurances from a requesting state which were not before the court of first instance." Even on these limited grounds, the case was considered worth examining by the High Court and legal experts in the field.

Last month, WikiLeaks cited a report of the case by the highly regarded London law firm Bindmans that noted: "Extradition practitioners largely welcome Supreme Court guidance on this point as late assurances designed to alleviate the court's concerns about human rights violations following extradition have become a highly contentious issue, especially when provided by States with a poor record in human rights themselves."

However, having been given the option to go through the motions and apply the Supreme Court's legal imprimatur to Assange's effective rendition, the justices instead delivered a one-line rejection: "The court ordered that permission to appeal be refused because the application does not raise an arguable point of law."

The meaning is clear: the time for charades is over, Assange must be dealt with quickly.

This was a decision reached at the highest levels of the British state, delivered by the President of the Supreme Court Lord Reed and the Deputy President Lord Hodge, alongside Lord Briggs. The NATO-Russia war being waged through the proxy conflict in Ukraine,

moving ever closer to a direct military confrontation between nuclear armed powers, has doubtless come as a powerful spur to action, underscoring for the ruling class why Assange must be silenced.

NATO's drive to war with Russia relies on a wall-to-wall propaganda operation to disguise the predatory ambitions of the imperialist powers and present their intervention as the outcome of humanitarian concern for the Ukrainian people. Government talking points are dutifully regurgitated by the corporate media, whose opinion pages are opened to a torrent of Russophobia and calls for military escalation.

Assange has been imprisoned for a decade, his health destroyed and life endangered, because he is a declared enemy of this co-opted "journalism" and has fearlessly exposed the unrestrained criminality, barbarism and duplicity of American imperialism and its allies. WikiLeaks exposed mass civilian casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan, the use of torture and death squads in both countries, the savagery practised in Guantanamo Bay and US sponsorship of coups and corruption worldwide.

Since the Russian invasion, WikiLeaks's Twitter account has repeatedly posted a video clip of an interview with Assange where he comments, "Nearly every war that has started in the past fifty years has been the result of media lies... populations don't willingly and with open eyes go into a war."

The account has also published links to secret US diplomatic communications acquired by WikiLeaks and published in 2010. These include a 2008 cable written by current CIA director William Burns, then ambassador to Moscow, warning of Russia's deep strategic concerns over NATO membership for Ukraine and the possibility of a civil war in such an event.

Another tweet links to "A decade of Russia v US gas wars in Europe laid out in US embassy cable (2008)".

Critical thought of this kind, encouraging a deeper look at the origins of the war in Ukraine than simply, "Who fired the first shot," is now routinely branded the work of a traitorous, pro-Putin fifth column. Indeed, Assange was one of the first targets of the "Russian stooge" witch-hunt, led by the Democratic Party in the US and the *Guardian* newspaper in the UK, waged in connection with demands for President Donald Trump to take a more aggressive stand towards Moscow.

Beyond Assange as an individual, his persecution is

intended to spearhead a wider crackdown on opposition to NATO and war in the working class. The *World Socialist Web Site* wrote ahead of the US government's successful High Court appeal last October, "From the beginning, the US and its allies have sought to destroy Assange both as a warning and a precedent to prevent any serious reporting of imperialist war crimes, human rights abuses, diplomatic intrigues and mass state surveillance—to cover up past crimes and to prepare new ones."

That new crime has taken the form of a criminal and dangerous ongoing provocation against Russia that was intended to provoke its invasion of Ukraine and which risks spiralling out of control towards a third world war, fought with nuclear weapons. The international working class is confronted with the urgent need to develop a mass anti-war movement in a fight against their criminal governments.

Assange's treatment exposes the utter hypocrisy of the imperialist powers' condemnations of the Putin government's suppression of anti-war protest in Russia. It proves that any serious opposition to the war plans of British and US imperialism will be met with the same brutal methods.

The British, American, Russian and world working class must be mobilised on a common socialist perspective of class struggle to defend democratic rights and overthrow the warmongers. The campaign to free Assange is inseparably connected with that fight.



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