

Julian Assange faces extradition and state murder while the war criminals he exposed walk free

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On Friday, British Home Secretary Priti Patel announced that she has approved WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange's extradition to the United States. Assange's family, including his wife, Stella Moris, immediately declared that they would fight the decision, including through a further British legal appeal.

If Assange is extradited, he faces 18 charges under the Espionage Act and 175 years imprisonment for publishing what the American government and the British courts acknowledge was true information exposing US foreign policy.

When it comes to Ukraine, the US and its allies continuously claim that they are defending democracy against Russian "authoritarianism." On the basis of these assertions, the Biden administration has funneled tens of billions of dollars in weaponry to the Ukrainian government, in what has become a US-NATO proxy war against Russia.

In the Asia-Pacific, Washington and its allies similarly assert that they are defending "freedom" in opposition to Chinese "autocracy."

The persecution of Assange exposes all of these statements as complete lies used to justify a program of aggressive militarism and war.

In the heart of Britain, Assange, a journalist, is imprisoned in a maximum-security prison without charge, while the US seeks his extradition for exposing its war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Assange's legal and democratic rights have been continuously attacked. There is clear evidence that the US oversaw a massive spying operation against Assange, while he was a political refugee in Ecuador's London embassy. This included illegal surveillance of

his privileged communications with lawyers.

Last September, *Yahoo! News* reported that in 2017, the Trump administration and the CIA discussed kidnapping or assassinating Assange in London. The article was based on the statements of 30 former US officials.

Outgoing United Nations Rapporteur Nils Melzer has repeatedly branded the US and British treatment of Assange as torture. Hundreds of doctors have demanded Assange's freedom and warned of his deteriorating health.

Despite all of this, the Biden administration has continued the prosecution and the British courts have facilitated it. The contradiction between the supposed US-led campaign for "freedom" in Ukraine and its determination to lock Assange away is a staggering display of imperialist hypocrisy.

What is Assange accused of? The American charges against him cover WikiLeaks' 2010 and 2011 publication of the US army's Iraq and Afghan war logs, its Guantanamo Bay detainee files and 250,000 diplomatic cables.

Together, the documents are one of the most powerful exposures of imperialist war in recent history. They expose all the lies about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan being about "democracy" and "human rights." Instead, these wars were shown to be bloody neo-colonial operations involving daily killings, torture and mass oppression.

The **Afghan war logs** detailed atrocities that had never seen the light of day, from NATO bombings of school buses and weddings to the existence of a US hit squad tasked with assassinating opponents of the occupation.

The **Iraq war logs** recorded the deaths of 109,000 Iraqis, 66,081 of them described by the US army as civilians. 15,000 of those murdered would have left no trace in history but for Assange, because their killings had been completely covered up by the US and its allies.

American soldiers gunning down civilians at military checkpoints, their contractors opening fire in crowded markets, the torture of thousands of detainees by the US puppet government were all registered in the logs as the norm, not the exception.

The **Guantanamo Bay detainee files** exposed the global dragnet of the “war on terror.” The files showed that those being subjected to the most horrific forms of incarceration were overwhelmingly innocent civilians: An 89-year-old Afghan farmer with dementia was one, a 14-year-old boy another.

The **diplomatic cables** revealed that the illegality of the wars was standard operating procedure for US imperialism all over the world. In their pages was proof of US sponsorship for innumerable dictatorships, the plotting of coups, the cultivation of agents in governments, “friendly” and hostile alike, and spying on United Nations officials.

All of the revelations were summed up in the **Collateral Murder** video, the footage of US soldiers in an Apache helicopter gleefully gunning down a crowd of Iraqi civilians and two Reuters journalists. No other video, in recent decades, has played such a role in activating the mass anti-war sentiment that exists among workers and young people.

For all of these crimes, the only person in the world facing prison time is Julian Assange, who exposed them. Meanwhile, the war criminals walk free.

George W. Bush lied about weapons of mass destruction and has the blood of a million Iraqis on his hands. But he has been rehabilitated by the Democrats and the corporate media, and is presented as an elder statesman of US politics.

Tony Blair, the former Labour Prime Minister who oversaw Britain’s participation in the invasion of Iraq, is a figure of mass popular hatred. But this month, Blair was provided with a knighthood.

The attempt to prosecute Assange is an exercise in retribution for his exposure of imperialist lies. It is also part of the preparation for new and even greater crimes.

The neo-colonial wars that WikiLeaks exposed have

metastasized into a global conflict that threatens nuclear war. The US is waging a proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and is confronting China in the Asia-Pacific.

This program, which threatens a world war, is incompatible with even the trappings of democracy. Assange’s persecution is intended as a precedent for broader frame-ups and victimisations targeting opponents of imperialism.

In other words, the stakes are immense and the fight for Assange’s freedom is more urgent than ever.

In this struggle, nothing would be more fatal than illusions that moral appeals to Assange’s persecutors will convince them to end their decade-long attacks on him.

What is required to free Assange and to bring the war criminals he exposed to account is the mobilisation of the international working class.

All over the world, workers are entering into struggle against the very governments that have spearheaded Assange’s persecution. In Britain, the US and everywhere else there is immense hostility to the “herd immunity” COVID policies, which have resulted in mass infection and death. And now, mass strikes and protests are developing in opposition to the massive price rises, continuous cuts to wages and cuts to social spending.

In Britain, 50,000 rail workers are going on strike this week. Many of them will be only a few miles from where Assange is imprisoned. In the US, there are struggles brewing among auto workers, nurses, teachers and other sections, as there are in Australia.

This emerging movement of the working class provides the constituency for a fight for Assange’s freedom, the defence of democratic rights and the struggle against war. We appeal to all workers and youth to take up the defence of Assange, as part of the fight for all of your social and democratic rights.



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