

# Assange submits extradition appeal to UK High Court as events held to mark his 51st birthday

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WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has appealed to the High Court against his extradition order. Home Secretary Priti Patel signed off on his removal to the United States on June 17.

Such an appeal would likely begin to address the real issues of democratic rights at stake in the more than a decade long persecution of Assange, which the US government and British courts have largely contrived to exclude from proceedings thus far. His wife Stella Morris told ABC radio last month that the appeal would include evidence of CIA assassination plots, including plans to poison Assange while he was claiming asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London.

Writing for *The Scotsman*, legal scholar Dr Paul Arnell of Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen explained that this stage of the case could examine “whether his right to freedom of expression is sufficiently important to bar his extradition, and whether the US request for him was motivated for reasons of his political opinions.”

In a parallel case in Spain Assange’s lawyers are pursuing company UC Global, which provided security at the Ecuadorian Embassy, for spying on Assange and his associates on behalf of US intelligence. Last month, judge Santiago Pedraz sought to summon former CIA director and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in connection with kidnap and assassination plots against the WikiLeaks founder revealed by *Yahoo* last September.

The British state’s complicity in this ongoing manhunt was highlighted by Pompeo’s visit to the UK last week. Patel tweeted a photo of them together with the caption, “Delighted to host my friend, former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo at the Home Office.”

Morris commented, “Pompeo is not part of the Biden administration, so protocol-wise Patel’s tweet is very odd and diplomatically awkward. Pompeo is avoiding a summons to testify before the Spanish High Court about plans to assassinate Assange issued earlier this month.”

Pompeo pursued Assange for his exposure of US imperialism’s criminal wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He was in London to advance another. Patel continued, “Our nations stand shoulder to shoulder to uphold and respect our shared values and right now that could not be clearer than in our steadfast support for Ukraine against Putin’s aggression.”

In a speech to the Policy Exchange, Pompeo called on the UK to support US aggression against China, repeating the Wuhan lab lie alleging Chinese responsibility for the COVID pandemic.

The UK High Court must agree to hear Assange’s appeal before it can proceed. British judges have already refused to give the WikiLeaks founder a hearing during his case. Prior to the matter being sent to Patel, Assange appealed an earlier decision of the High Court in favour of the US to the Supreme Court. It issued a one-line refusal to hear the case in March, meaning it passed straight into Patel’s hands.

If the High Court does the same with this latest appeal, Assange’s legal team has indicated they will pursue other avenues up to the European Court of Human Rights.

But the Johnson government is already busy with efforts to close off this avenue. Last month it put the abolition of the Human Rights Act before parliament, in preparation for its replacement with a British Bill of Rights. One element of Tory efforts to weaken human

rights protections are plans to override the power of the EHRC, citing a commitment to sovereignty including asserting the primacy of British courts.

Opposition to the legislation focused on the recent decision of the ECHR to pause some deportations of asylum seekers to Rwanda, pending a British judicial review process. But this is only one example among many of the carte blanche sought by the government to pursue its criminal agenda—and moving ahead with Assange's extradition ranks high in its wish list.

Any appeals, moreover, mean months of legal arguments and hearings during which time Assange will remain incarcerated in Belmarsh maximum security prison in London, where he has now been held for over three years. The government deliberately placed Assange, a journalist, in a facility used to hold prisoners considered dangerous—with extremely strict restrictions on visits and access to the outside world—to damage his mental and physical health.

This was underscored by his brutal treatment after Patel announced her decision to extradite. Claiming to be concerned for his health and risk of self-harm, Belmarsh prison had Assange stripped naked and placed in a bare cell. He was then denied visitors over the weekend.

During the main extradition hearings held in 2020, psychologists testified to the compromised state of Assange's mental health and the danger of a suicide attempt, confirming warnings of psychological torture made by UN special rapporteur on torture Nils Melzer and campaign group Doctors for Assange. The evidence provided the basis for an initial decision, now overturned, not to extradite, because to do so would be “oppressive” to Assange.

Professor of neuropsychiatry Michael Kopelman told the original extradition hearing in September 2020 there was a “very high risk of suicide” and that “it is the imminence of extradition and/or an actual extradition that will trigger the attempt.” Moris said last month that Assange had “recently” told her he would kill himself if extradited to the US.

Events were held around the world over the weekend to mark the WikiLeaks founder's 51st birthday, his tenth under some form of incarceration in Britain, whether trapped claiming asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy or held in prison.

Longstanding supporters sent messages of support,

including veteran Australian investigative journalist John Pilger, who tweeted, “Since I met Julian more than a decade ago, I have watched this heroic man pursued and persecuted by those who hide their extremism behind democratic facades. He has exposed them, and we are grateful. I salute my friend on his birthday.”

Italian journalists and a previous co-worker with Assange Stefania Maurizi noted, “Tomorrow is Julian Assange's birthday. In 2011 he invited me to his 40th birthday party: he was under house arrest, then 7 years in an embassy, now in Belmarsh. For my newspaper, I've partnered with Wikileaks since 2009: last time I met him as a free man? 28 Sept 2010.”

In a statement for *Double Down News*, Moris indicted the UK and US governments: “At every stage, the law has been abused in order to victimise Julian... The position of the UK right now is that it will extradite a publisher to the country who conspired to murder him.” She continued, “How much did the UK government know? How far was the UK government willing to go along with the US government's plans under the CIA directorship of Mike Pompeo? These are questions which remain unanswered.”

This Sunday, at 3 p.m., the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) will hold an online public meeting, “Oppose British extradition order: Fight to free Julian Assange!” The SEP explains, “The persecution of Assange is an attack on the mass opposition among workers and young people to these war policies. It is intended as a precedent for broader frame-ups and victimisations. This is being pursued, as part of a turn to authoritarian forms of rule, directed against a resurgence of working-class struggle, including major strikes in Britain, the US and Australia.

“At this meeting, Socialist Equality Party speakers from Australia and Britain will outline the need for a stepped-up campaign for Assange's freedom. As with the struggle against war, securing Assange's freedom requires the mobilisation of the international working-class, the only constituency for democratic rights.”



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