

Assange's wife Stella Moris demolishes US warmonger John Bolton on live TV

Oscar Grenfell
6 October 2022

A segment on Piers Morgan's "Uncensored Program" yesterday provided its mass audience with a rare and unvarnished demonstration of the two sides in the case of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange, who is imprisoned in Britain and faces extradition to the United States for exposing American war crimes.

On the one hand, Assange's wife Stella Moris outlined the dire precedent that the US is seeking to establish by prosecuting a journalist for publishing true information. She spoke eloquently in defence of the democratic rights of Assange and the population at large, as well as on the importance of upholding international legal norms.

On the other hand, John Bolton, a lifelong Republican politician and state apparatchik, ranted and raved as he asserted the "right" of the American government to ruin the life of anyone who gets in the way of its "national interests."

The program was broadcast on British television's TalkTV station, and has already been watched hundreds of thousands of times on social media.

The response demonstrates the true public opinion of Assange, which is generally buried by the official media. Moris has received widespread praise for her thoughtful and principled comments, including her statements on Bolton's own relationship to war crimes. Bolton's remarks have been condemned as dangerous and frightening.

Morgan began by noting that Assange has been locked up in Britain's Belmarsh Prison, a "very high security" and "grim" facility, for almost four years, following seven years of arbitrary detention at Ecuador's British embassy. Where did Moris think the case would go, and what did she hope to achieve, he asked.

Moris, who is herself a widely-respected human

rights lawyer, explained: "Julian faces a potential sentence in the United States of 175 years for doing journalistic work. For receiving information from a source and publishing it, and it was in the public interest. It was about US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan, and he revealed tens of thousands of civilian deaths that had not been acknowledged before."

Morgan said that he would play "devil's advocate," repeating the oft-repeated claim that while the *Guardian* and the *New York Times* had redacted the material from whistleblower Chelsea Manning, WikiLeaks had dumped it online, placing individuals at risk.

Asked if she accepted this argument, Moris replied forcefully: "I don't accept it, because it's not true. WikiLeaks did actually redact all of those documents that Manning gave to WikiLeaks, and in fact it was in cooperation with those newspapers."

WikiLeaks, Moris noted, had withheld 15,000 documents from the US army's Afghan war logs, and had been criticised by some for extensive redactions of the Iraq war logs. The publication of 250,000 leaked diplomatic cables, in full, had not been the doing of WikiLeaks. Instead it was the outcome of *Guardian* journalists recklessly publishing the password to the tranche in a book.

Morgan then introduced Bolton, asking him why the US was so determined to bring Assange to "unbelievably draconian justice," in the form of the 175-year sentence that would await him in an American supermax jail.

Bolton, unbelievably, responded: "Well, I think that's a small amount of the sentence he deserves." Bolton then spouted a series of false generalities, which he made no attempt to substantiate. Assange had

committed “criminal activities,” he was “no more a journalist than the chair I’m sitting on,” had “placed individuals at risk,” etc. etc.

The only note of truth came when Bolton bitterly complained that Assange had obstructed the pursuit of the US “national interest.” That is, Assange’s lawful, journalistic activities had cut across the criminal militarist policies of the US government.

The US politician blithely stated that Assange would receive “due process” and a “fair trial” in America, before proclaiming “I hope he gets 176 years!” Bolton was apparently oblivious to the stark contradiction between those assertions, but the audience undoubtedly was not. Assange will receive “due process,” says the US state operative, as he proclaims his hope that the journalist is locked in a cell with the key effectively thrown away.

Moris proceeded to demolish Bolton’s threadbare arguments. The former US ambassador was a kind of “ideological nemesis of Julian.”

“During his time in the Bush administration and later the Trump administration he sought to undermine the international legal system, sought to ensure that the US is not under the International Criminal Court’s jurisdiction. And if it was, Mr Bolton might in fact be prosecuted under the ICC. He was one of the chief cheerleaders of the Iraq war, which Julian then exposed through these leaks, so he has a conflict of interest.”

Bolton cackled maniacally and described Moris’s statement as “ridiculous.”

In fact, Bolton has supported every criminal US-led war since Vietnam. He was the Bush administration’s ambassador to the United Nations, as it continued the illegal occupation of Iraq, a war based on lies that claimed over a million lives.

As Wikipedia notes, “Bolton is widely considered a foreign policy hawk” who has variously advocated “military action and regime change by the US in Iran, Syria, Libya, Venezuela, Cuba, Yemen, and North Korea.” In other words, he is a representative of the militarist, state apparatus that Assange has exposed.

Bolton sought to retort, by demanding to know whether Moris accepted that Assange would receive a fair trial in the US.

Moris explained that he would not. Assange was the first journalist to be prosecuted under the Espionage Act. It contains no public interest defence, and even

corporate publications have warned that the case is a body blow to freedom of the press.

Moris again warned of Assange’s deteriorating health, which threatens his life. He was like a “caged animal,” deprived from regular contact with his family, friends and collaborators. Moris called on viewers to participate in a human chain protest for Assange’s freedom around the British parliament this Saturday, October 8, at 1 p.m. UK time. Rallies are also being held in other cities around the world.

The segment underscored what is at stake in the fight for Assange’s freedom. Bolton gave a particularly blunt and unvarnished expression to the line of all of the governments involved in the persecution of Assange, including the Biden administration in the US, which is pursuing extradition, the British government, which is detaining Assange in a maximum-security prison, and the Labor government in Australia, which refuses to defend the WikiLeaks publisher, despite the fact that he is an Australian citizen.

All of them are using the pursuit of Assange to set a precedent for far broader victimisations, especially targeting widespread opposition to war. This occurs as the imperialist powers, led by the US, are waging a proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, which threatens a nuclear catastrophe, and as they are confronting China.

As the WSWs has insisted, the fight for Assange’s freedom must be a central component of a new, international movement of the working class, aimed at halting the catastrophic descent into a world war and the related onslaught on fundamental democratic rights.



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact