



# Arrest of Julian Assange - a “worldwide criminalization of journalism”?



**The founder of the WikiLeaks disclosure platform, Julien Assange, was arrested by the British police at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London on 11th April 2019. According to the British police, a US extradition request had been issued. The USA accuses Assange of conspiracy. Assange has been in the Ecuadorian embassy in London since 2012.**

The founder of the WikiLeaks disclosure platform, Julien Assange, was arrested by the British police at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London on 11th April 2019.

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The previous government of Ecuador under President Rafael Correa had granted him asylum and thus protected him from extradition to Sweden.

Assange was accused of sexually harassing two Swedish women in 2010. However, the founder of WikiLeaks had always asserted his innocence and suspected that this accusation could be a political frame-up.

The Swedish case was dropped in 2017. Nevertheless, he had long been threatened with arrest by the British police for alleged "violations of bail conditions".

This arrest now became possible because the current President of Ecuador, Lenin Moreno, had recently deprived Assange of the diplomatic asylum and Ecuadorian citizenship - allegedly because of violations of the embassy's rules.

Assange has been threatened for years with extradition to the USA and a subsequent criminal trial. US authorities accuse him of “conspiracy for computer hacking”.

WikiLeaks repeatedly published internal documents from the US army and US authorities and brought to light scandalous human rights violations in the US prison Guantánamo Bay and atrocities by the US armed forces in the Iraq war and Afghanistan.

Especially, Assange is accused of a joint conspiracy with the computer specialist and member of the US armed forces Bradley Manning, who after a gender reassignment is now called Chelsea Manning.

Manning had passed on information about the war crimes of the USA in Iraq to him. As a result, WikiLeaks had published most of the more than 740,000 documents on the website.

The maximum sentence for the “conspiracy to invade computers” is officially five years.

Various voices from the USA, such as for example, Fox News presenter Bill O'Reilly or the political scientist Tom Flanagan, had demanded the death penalty for Assange years ago.

Assange's attorneys are certain that the charge of “conspiracy for computer hacking” is not the end of the story. They expect him and other WikiLeaks staff members to be charged on the basis of the Espionage Act. This is an old law from 1917, which provides for imprisonment for decades and, in particularly severe cases, the death penalty.

WikiLeaks activist Assange's mother, Christine Assange, some time ago already mentioned what dramatic consequences an extradition of her son to the US authorities could have: "They blame my son in order to justify an extradition to the USA, where a show trial awaits him. [...] For the past eight years he has had no proper legal proceedings. It was unfair at every stage and a perversion of the law. There is no reason to believe that this will change in the future.

The US Grand Jury that is responsible for WikiLeaks, who filed the extradition request, met secretly with four prosecutors, but without defence and without judges. The extradition treaty between the UK and the US allows the UK to extradite Julian to the US without a genuine criminal offence.

In the USA, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) permits indefinite detention without a trial. Julian could very well be detained and tortured in Guantanamo, sentenced to 45 years in a high-security prison or sentenced to death. My son's life is endangered through brutal political persecution of unscrupulous rulers, whose crimes and corruption he courageously brought to the public as head of WikiLeaks.

We must protest to curb this brutality. I call on all journalists to stand up now because he is your colleague and you are next. I call on all politicians who say they have entered politics to help people get up now.

I call on all activists who stand up for human rights, refugees, the environment and against war to stand up now because WikiLeaks supported your concerns and Julian is now suffering at your side for it.

I appeal to all citizens who value freedom, democracy and fair justice to put aside their political differences and to join together."

The members of the Bundestag Heike Hänsel and Sevim Dagdelen (both left-wing) and the Spanish MEP Ana Miranda (from the Greens) point out how seriously Western freedom of the press is threatened if no protests or counter initiatives are taken in the Assange case.

Assange's extradition to the US authorities and a conviction of the WikiLeaks activist create a "dangerous precedent" by which journalists from all around the world, including EU citizens, could be extradited to the US if reporting is interpreted as a risk to the national security of the USA. There is the threat of a "worldwide criminalization of journalism".

**from kno.**

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