

The Rt. Hon Priti Patel  
Secretary of State for the Home Department  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

22 April 2022

Dear Home Secretary,

We, the undersigned press freedom, free expression and journalists' organisations are writing to express our serious concern regarding the possibility of extradition of WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange to the United States and to ask you to reject the US government's extradition request. We also request a meeting with you to discuss these points further.

In March, the Supreme Court refused to consider Mr Assange's appeal against the High Court decision, which overturned the District Court ruling barring extradition on mental health grounds. We are deeply disappointed with this decision given the high public interest in this case, which deserved review by the highest court in the land.

However, it is now in your hands to decide whether to approve or reject Mr Assange's extradition to the US. The undersigned organisations urge you to act in the interest of press freedom and journalism by refusing extradition and immediately releasing Mr Assange from prison, where he has remained on remand for three years despite the great risks posed to his mental and physical health.

In the US, Mr Assange would face trial on 17 counts under the Espionage Act and one count under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, which combined could see him imprisoned for up to 175 years. He is highly likely to be detained there in conditions of isolation or solitary confinement despite the US government's assurances, which would severely exacerbate his risk of suicide.

Further, Mr Assange would be unable to adequately defend himself in the US courts, as the Espionage Act lacks a public interest defence. His prosecution would set a dangerous precedent that could be applied to any media outlet that published stories based on leaked information, or indeed any journalist, publisher or source anywhere in the world.

We ask you, Home Secretary, to honour the UK government's commitment to protecting and promoting media freedom and reject the US extradition request. We ask you to release Mr Assange from Belmarsh prison and allow him to return to his young family after many years of isolation. Finally, we ask you to publicly commit to ensuring that no publisher, journalist or source ever again faces detention in the UK for publishing information in the public interest.

We request to schedule a meeting at your earliest convenience, and would be grateful for a prompt response. Please reply via Azzurra Moores at Reporters Without Borders (RSF) at [amoores@rsf.org](mailto:amoores@rsf.org).

Sincerely,

Rebecca Vincent, Director of Operations and Campaigns, Reporters Without Borders (RSF)

Sarah Clarke, Head of Europe and Central Asia, ARTICLE 19

Mark Johnson, Legal and Policy Officer, Big Brother Watch

Dr Suelette Dreyfus, Executive Director, Blueprint for Free Speech

Daniel Gorman, Director, English PEN

Laurens Hueting, Senior Advocacy Officer, European Centre for Press and Media Freedom (ECPMF)

Ricardo Gutiérrez, General Secretary, European Federation of Journalists (EFJ)

Ralf Nestmeyer, Vice-President and Writers-in-Prison Officer, German PEN

Index on Censorship

Anthony Bellanger, General Secretary, International Federation of Journalists (IFJ)

Séamus Dooley, Assistant General Secretary, National Union of Journalists

Romana Cacchioli, Executive Director, PEN International

Christine McKenzie, President, PEN International Melbourne Centre

Kjersti Løken Stavrum, President, PEN Norway

Zoë Rodriguez, joint President, PEN Sydney, and Chair of the PEN International Women Writers Committee

Peter Tatchell, Director, Peter Tatchell Foundation

Ricky Monahan Brown, President, Scottish PEN

Tanja Tuma, President, Slovene PEN

Jesper Bengtsson, President, Swedish PEN