



Interview with WikiLeaks Investigative Editor – Sarah Harrison

Note: This transcript may not be 100% correct.

Zain Raza:

Sarah Harrison is a British Journalist, Investigation Editor at Wikileaks and the director of the Courage Foundation. She played a decisive role in accompanying NSA Whistleblower Edward Snowden from Hong Kong to Moscow when the highly classified NSA documents were released in 2013.

Thank you for joining us Sarah!

Sarah Harrison:

Thank you for having me!

Zain Raza:

So let's talk about Julian Assange's state in the Ecuadorian embassy. Lot of people speculate - How it is to live there? In what state and condition he is in? Can you elaborate on that?

Sarah Harrison

Well he stays very strong. He focuses on his work a lot and with his type of personality and work ethic this keeps him very busy and keeps him going. We have a lot of good publications coming up this year, so yea, that definitely keeps him busy. There have been some interesting wins in his legal case this year, for example, the United Nations ruled that his attention arbitrary and that United Kingdom and Sweden should release him immediately. Sadly, those countries are not actually following the United Nations judgement but it is still a positive move forward in his case. There are very difficult conditions that he is there under, for example he basically is in one room within what is a very small embassy in the centre of London. He has not outside space, he hasn't been able to be in the sun for 4 years now. So they are tough conditions but he works through and he stays strong.

Zain Raza:

Talking about that UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Phillip Hammond, the UK Foreign

Secretary, dismissed it and called it let me quote him "ridiculous" and "flawed in law". Can you comment on these reactions and explain us why there is such a strong reaction against this report?

Sarah Harrison:

Well Julian actually has asylum due to the threat of the United States. There is a very secret grand jury that is going on that is unprecedented in scale and nature and the largest investigation into a publisher ever. This continues until this day, it's been going since 2010 and it is for this threat that he has asylum. Obviously as if we've seen in a number of situations the UK & the US are very close politically and there is the case with Julian has been highly politicized. So it is within that realm understandable that the UK [are] upset the United Nations are trying to ensure that they follow the rule of law in this case. It is very sad to me as a British citizen that our MPs can stand there and say that the United Nations is ridiculous. To me that is just sad and shows how much we have diverted from the rule of law in our supposed Western democracies.

Zain Raza:

He also fear espionage and that's one of the reasons [actually issues] I think that do not receive enough facts in the mainstream media. Could you talk about what facts point towards that there is investigation ongoing to extradite him on those cases?

Sarah Harrison:

A number of documents come out in a variety of ways some through hard Freedom of Information Act cases within the US. One came out interestingly couple of years ago that was subpoenas to Google for emails of a number of Wikileaks staff including myself. This was my personal Google account that I hadn't used for quite a number of years... but when.. we were allowed to be told about this subpoena, we were given documentation on this and this showed the legal charges, the criminal codes the US government had to use to get this subpoena. And yes as you say, this included the Espionage Act, Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, Conspiracy and a number of others - and these total many many years in jail and we've seen through the history of the United States for example with the Chelsea Manning case, that she was given 35 years in jail and was subjected to treatment that was akin to torture and this is what Julian can expect if he ends up in the United States.

Zain Raza:

I want to talk quickly about two principles about the Nuremberg Charter which greatly contributed to International Law when it came in terms of war crimes.

Principle 4: "The fact that a person acted pursuant to order of his government or a superior does not relieve him from the responsibility under international law provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him."

And Principle 7: "Complicity in the commission of a crime against peace, a war crime or a crime against humanity set forth in principle 4 is a crime under international law"

So given these two principles would you say Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden and Assange acted in moral conscious and just followed international law or would you say that the argument that they jeopardized national security plays a more decisive factor?

Sarah Harrison:

I think that the concept that there has been any affect to so called "national security" is actually just a propaganda term that the government has put out to essentially scare people into believing that there are issues with acts of blowing the whistle and publishing this sort of information. There was an interesting point when we released the Afghan and then Iraq war logs in 2010 - we were showing the US government's war crimes and their killing of hundreds of thousands of people and yet they somehow managed to [undertake] very successful propaganda attack where they turned this around and said we had blood on our hands. Now when it came to Manning trial, they tried desperately to prove this in the court of law and actually even the United States government were unable to actually let this argument stand up in court. It has been proven to be false in their own courts of law and so this is clearly just one example of where it is just propaganda attacks on us. I think that it is clear to many people that the actions of Manning, Snowden, Assange are actually to do with not only higher ethic but actually within the rule of law, particularly when it comes to Edward Snowden and the US constitution - he has actually just been upholding that with his actions.

Zain Raza:

So what future do you envision for Assange, Snowden, Manning and what can people in Germany and worldwide do to support them given the state that they are in currently?

Sarah Harrison:

Well Manning just last month lodged an appeal against her sentence. Courage Foundation that I am the director of, is running a place where you can donate. It will be a costly and long appeal and she'll need all the money she can get in that. Same for Julian Assange and his long defence funders, you can see even these are the powers that we are up against when even the United Nations is being ignored. So we definitely need as much help as possible there. And when it comes to Wikileaks - we have many many good publications coming up for the rest of this year and if you want to see them faster then just donate more there!

Zain Raza:

Sarah Harrison, director of the Courage Foundation, thank you for joining us!

Sarah Harrison:

Thanks for having me!