



Assange's father John Shipton & Wikileaks Chief Editor Kristinn Hrafnsson on how you can support

This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.

Zain Raza (ZR):

Thank you for joining us today. Today we are here with Julian Assange's father. Could you introduce yourself for our young viewers in Germany?

John Shipton (JS):

Hi, everybody. I'm John Shipton. Julian Assange's father. I've spent considerable time in Germany and in Berlin, in Cologne, speaking to people about Julian's situation. And the German movement for bringing freedom to Julian is extremely strong.

Zain Raza (ZR):

And could you tell us: We always hear the case about the legal situation, the situation with journalism. But can you provide us a perspective about in terms of feelings and emotions, how you feel about this? And also the last part of the question, what can individuals do to support Assange at this crucial moment in time?

JS:

Well, answering the last question first. There's plenty you can do. For example, you can write to the Minister of Justice so you can support Die Link or the Green Parliamentarians who are acting to bring freedom to Julian and consequently bring freedom of press and freedom of discussion, freedom of conversation to all of Europe.

ZR:

Thank you so much for your time.

ZR:

Thank you for joining us today. We have a lot of young viewers in Germany that follow us. So just briefly, could you introduce yourself?

Kristinn Hrafnsson (KR):

My name is Kristinn Hrafnsson. I'm an Icelandic investigative journalist. I've been with WikiLeaks for 10 years. Prior to that, I was working as a journalist in Iceland, mostly for 20 years. And I took over as editor in chief from Julian when the situation became so unbearable in the Ecuadorian embassy that he couldn't operate there anymore.

ZR:

In your speech today you talked about that you visited Assange [recently]. Could you, for our viewers, just describe the situation there, how he's doing, how he's feeling and how he's psychologically and physically holding up?

KR:

He is holding up actually remarkably well, considering the circumstances. I mean, every ordinary individual would have collapsed way before. But he is a [has an] extremely strong personality. But it has taken a toll. He was in a critical condition while he was basically being isolated in the hospital wing. That was solitary confinement, basically. He recently was moved from out of the wing and has now more interaction with inmates. He has improved a lot since then. And he has also been heartened by the support that he recognizes coming from the outside and even from the prisoners in Belmarsh who actually have petitioned on three occasions for a change in the situation. This is extraordinary, inspiring that you would find more humanity by the hardened prisoner in maximum security prison in the UK than with the authorities or the government here in the UK, who have actually okayed the extradition.

So he has been improving. But you have to look back as well that he spent all these years in the Ecuadorian embassy and the fact that sanctuary was transformed into a prison towards the end of his time there in the embassy when there was a change in government in Ecuador. So. It's been a long fight and it's not over. It could even take years to fight for his freedom if we have to go through appeal courts and supreme court here. But let's hope it doesn't come to that, that with public support, because it does matter both in this country and internationally and in Germany, all over the world, that the pressure can be applied to actually end this very tragic situation that we have to fight for an innocent man, a publisher for this simple crime of publishing.

ZR:

The case of Julian Assange might pave the way where they might come for WikiLeaks directly. Do you fear that they might come and prosecute you personally and your team? And lastly, what can people do that cannot take part in campaigns but do want a change and support WikiLeaks and supporting investigative journalism, protect press freedoms?

KR:

Of course, we know that there are members of the team that have been in the crosshairs apart from Julian Assange. I myself have been under investigation since 2010 or 2011, and we

have been knowing that since 2013. So, yes, I do worry about others. There are actually people who have been contributing in an even minor parts to publications that are American citizens that are living in exile in Germany, for example, in other countries whose identity the U.S. government knows and they have been threatened of all sorts [in all sorts of ways]. They've been approached and [it has been said to them] said “if you'll bear witness against Julian Assange, we will not prosecute you”. And this is what I call the Godfather offer. The offer you can't refuse. It's from a gangster film. It's a gangster technique. These people are not returning to the United States and [are] living in exile de facto.

What can people do? People need to care and they need to create a demand for more discussion about Julian Assange's case and raise questions that his extradition could have on journalism in general. They should put up pressure on the journalistic community of this world to protest, to take a stand and to cover it extensively, not with superficial, superfluous cover: It's about personalities, but on the main issue, because in essence this is a blatant and serious attack on journalism - and because journalism is a foundation of our democratic value, it's an attack on European democracy. So everybody everywhere needs to take a stand and make his voice heard because this is a line that is being crossed now of such serious nature that we would lose such a huge thing in our society if Julian is actually extradited - that the thing [implying values] we will never regain. And so stand up for Assange as it was being chanted here.

ZR:

Thank you so much for your time.

END