



Assange Faces Inhumane Prison Conditions in the US | Reporters Without Borders

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Taylor Hudak (TH): Hi, everyone. I'm Taylor Hudak with acTVism Munich. I'm in London outside the Old Bailey Courthouse, and this is the start of the final week of Julian Assange's extradition hearings. The court heard from two defence witnesses today, where they spoke about the pre-trial conditions Assange could face if extradited to the United States. To discuss today's court proceedings is the executive director of RSF Germany, Christian Mihr. Christian, thank you for joining me. What is your general impression of what took place in court today?

Christian Mihr (CM): I mean, today we had two strong witnesses, who actually were arguing about the conditions and pre-trial detention prisons in the U.S. Their main points were actually that medical access to medical specialists, specialists and psychiatry specialists for people with a diagnosis Julian Assange faces are really difficult accessible. So, actually today's witnesses have been quite complementary to what we heard last week in court, where we really heard that Julian Assange faces himself suicide, that he faces daily-wise hallucinations and this. So, I would say, today's witnesses, I would say, confirmed again that Julian Assange could not be in a responsible way extradited, not talking about the fact that, of course, all the accusations against him from our perspective at RSF have no basis, because the only thing what he did is publishing information, which the public has a right to know. But, I mean, it's complementary what we heard today. What was interesting as well today was that the prosecution again with the second witnesses we heard that the only strategy was actually questioning his independence, and if this is actually the

strategy, I have the impression this lacks of substance, and it's a bit weak if you only are concentrating on really questioning the independence of the witness. And the third takeaway from today was actually that we heard about different rulings of the European Court of constitutional, of human rights, where actually U.S. extradition cases have been already, there were actually U.S. extradition cases have been a topic already, and that the European court of constitutional, of constitutional human rights actually acknowledged exactly these difficult conditions in pre-trial detention in the U.S., and so, this is another confirmation that Julian Assange, not only from a legal perspective on a press freedom basis but as well out of a humanitarian perspective, should be released immediately and that he should not be extradited.

TH: It seems very unreasonable that a journalist and publisher would be held in ADX in such poor conditions. As a member of RSF, are you concerned about this?

CM: Of course, we are very much concerned, and that's why we are committed for this case, because the case here of Julian Assange is, of course, legally the case against Julian Assange, but it's much more in the end. It's a case against press freedom and journalism as such, which is sitting here on trial, and that's why we at RSF are very much concerned, first of all, about Julian Assange himself but as well about press freedom and journalism as such, which is here on trial, because every journalist, who, after possible extradition, would afterwards investigate on intelligence affairs on any issues with national security in the U.S. faces the real risk of being persecuted like Julian Assange is.

TH: Should all journalists and members of the public be standing up for Julian Assange?

CM: Of course. I mean, it's not a surprising answer now, because, as I said earlier, I mean, it's not only a case about Julian Assange, it's a case here against journalism, against press freedom, and I'm not sure if everybody really understood this, but I think everybody should be now on the street, should be stand up and should be very clear and should demand actually the immediate release of Julian Assange, currently mostly because out of humanitarian reasons, because he really faces suicide, he faces actually that death, and so, the question of Julian Assange currently is a question not only anymore about press

freedom, but about life and death, and I think this is really concerning.

TH: Now lastly, why do you think NGO observers have been denied access to cover and observe this case?

CM: I mean, what is pretty disturbing at this whole case is that the UK obviously, with this case, has no interest in what we call legally, and from a human rights perspective, open justice. So, this whole monitoring, this whole hearing is a clear attack on the human rights principle of open justice. The UK violates its own obligation in international human rights frameworks, in its own obligation in the UK rule of law system, and I can only speculate what's actually the agenda behind this, but I can only describe that, actually, we see that actually the UK, with this case, with this hearing is clearly attacking open justice, but on the actual reasons behind, we will, in the future, maybe know more.

TH: OK. Christian Mihr, thank you. Now court will resume tomorrow morning, where two additional defence witnesses are expected to take the stand, so please make sure that you do subscribe to our YouTube channel, and if you do like the work that we do here, please donate to our organisation. I'm Taylor Hudak in London, and thank you all for watching.

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