



NO EXTRADITION for Julian Assange Rules UK Judge

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

Taylor Hudak (TH): Hi, everyone, I'm Taylor Hudak with acTVism Munich, and welcome back to another Julian Assange case update. We have been following this case very closely, and the judge has ruled against the US extradition request for Julian Assange. This comes as a significant development in the case, but it still leaves us with many questions.

Kristinn Hrafnsson (KH): But what a moment. A glimpse of hope to start the new year and hopefully a new era. It is a day, a day with win for Julian Assange. But we have to be cautious. It is not necessarily a win for journalism. I want to thank the lawyers for their work and bringing this about, which is quite extraordinary I am told on this level in a magistrates court.

TH: Prior to the court session on Monday at 10 a.m., Reporters Without Borders and other observers waited outside the courthouse for several hours in order to gain access to the courtroom. This case has historically lacked open justice, and it has been very difficult for some to gain access to the court proceedings. But this time the observers were harassed by City of London police and even threatened with arrest for just doing their jobs.

Rebecca Vincent (RV): I'm Rebecca Vincent, the Director of International Campaigns for Reporters Without Borders outside the Old Bailey, where we've been queuing since about 4:00 a.m. this morning. At the moment, there is extensive pressure from police on those who have been queuing to access the public gallery. They are telling us that the public gallery will not be open, which contradicts the information I have in writing from Judge Barraitser. So police officers are here. It's unusual for police to get involved in matters such as access to a court. That is a matter for the court, not for the police, certainly not in the City of London police. But we are not in violation of any Covid regulations. I am here for work purposes. I attempted to seek remote accreditation to this process and was denied that by the judge.

TH: Now, during the court proceedings, we learned that the judge denied the extradition request based on two factors -- Assange's mental health, in which he suffers from depression and Autism Spectrum Disorder, and the horrific prison conditions he would face in the United States. The

judge agreed that Assange would likely be held under special administrative measures, or SAMs, which would place him in the equivalent of solitary confinement. The judge stated that these conditions would increase Assange's risk of committing suicide. In her 132 page ruling the judge states, quote, "I find that the mental condition of Mr. Assange is such that it would be oppressive to extradite him to the United States of America," end quote. And while this ruling is a major victory in the Assange case, it is important to note that the judge was in agreement with the US government on just about all of their arguments, with the exception of Assange's mental health and the nature of the US prison system. The judge agreed with the United States that Assange would have due process and she did not recognize the political nature of the case, despite extensive evidence submitted during the hearings.

RV: We disagree with the judge's assessment that this case was not politically motivated. We disagree with her assessment that it was not about free speech. We remain convinced that Mr. Assange has been targeted for his contributions to journalism.

TH: The US government was clear in its position that it will seek an appeal to the judge's decision. And if the motion is approved, the case will be heard in a higher court. As of right now, Assange remains in custody at Belmarsh prison. A bail hearing will take place on Wednesday morning, January 6th.

Stella Moris (SM): As long as Julian has to endure suffering and isolation as an unconvicted prisoner in Belmarsh Prison and as long as our children continue to be bereft of their father's love and affection, we cannot celebrate. We will celebrate the day he comes home. I ask you all to shout louder, lobby harder until he is free. I call on everyone else to come together to defend Julian's rights -- not just Julian's rights, they're your rights too. I call on insiders to come forward to expose the full extent of the misconduct that has led to Julian's imprisonment. And I call on the President of the United States to end this now. Mr. President, tear down these prison walls. Let our little boys have their father. Free Julian, free the press, free us all.

TH: And despite the judge ruling against extradition, which is what we had long hoped for, the fight continues until Julian Assange is set free and home with his family. As long as he is in prison, the momentum we have now must carry on, and the US government ought to be politely pressured not to appeal the judge's ruling. acTVism Munich will continue to follow this case closely, including the upcoming bail hearing. So do make sure that you subscribe to our YouTube channel and hit that bell so you do not miss any of our updates on the case. I want to thank you guys for tuning in. I'm Taylor Hudak with acTVism Munich, and I'll see you in my next report.

Das Transkript gibt möglicherweise aufgrund der Tonqualität oder anderer Faktoren den ursprünglichen Inhalt nicht wortgenau wieder.

END