



## **Snowden on Assange: “If we are going to free the world, we have to free Assange”.**

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

**Edward Snowden (ES):** Thank you very much, it's a pleasure to be with you. It's difficult to be here. I struggle to understand how we can be here after so many years. There have been so many stories told. There's been so much criticism. There has been so much deception. And where has it brought us? Has this been constructive? Is this a victory for us, for the stakes, for humanity, for our rights? When I came forward in 2013, I said the reason that I came forward was that we have a right to know that which is done to us and that which is done in our name by our governments. That was already under threat. And when you look at the world since, it seems that that trend is accelerating, do we still have that right? Do we have any rights? If we don't defend them? Well, today we see someone who has stood up to defend that right, who has aggressively championed that right at an extreme cost. And it's time for us to defend his rights. What we're witnessing is a murder that passes without comment. And I want to say that it is difficult for me to comprehend the spectacle of the press of the nation or the developed world, aiding and abetting with full knowledge a crime not only against this man, but against our public interest. However, at this moment that we are, we all see this, we all feel it. It's no less familiar than the shoes on my feet. Everywhere we look from Afghanistan to economics, from pandemic to pervasive surveillance, the obvious has been made unspeakable. It has become unspeakable because the truth of our circumstances could be taken as evidence in the defence of the actions of the out-of-favor. And in the eyes of the American state, few represent this class, a greater object of hatred than the person Julian Assange. He has been charged as a political criminal, something that I understand quite well, but he has been charged as the purest sort of political criminal for having committed the transgression of choosing the wrong side. The charges, which are they are absolutely unadorned legal fiction. We are told to believe the state has these powers over what can be said or what can't be said, the things that can and cannot be said. But what happens if we permit that? Where does that lead? What are we? Can we be said to be free if even our power to express ourselves to understand the facts of our world can be fenced off from us? And we look beyond through the gauze through the veil at what could be the facts of the world. But we're not permitted to acquire them. Julian Assange did not accept that, and the charges against him reduced to an allegation to commit the crime of journalism in the first degree,

which is to say, when we look at it applied elsewhere, the same sort of publication of classified material that we see in the New York Times or The Washington Post aggravated by a conspiracy to accomplish the same, which is simply uncovering an uncomfortable truth. But something distinguishes Julian Assange from the greatest newspapers of our day. And that is his independence. Julian Assange is not the person who will be told no lately. I remember in the case of 2013, when I came forward and revealed evidence of mass surveillance, which the government of my country had constructed the apparatus of mass surveillance, the entire scheme that spanned the globe, with the participation of Australia, New Zealand, Canada and of course, the United Kingdom, and when the newspapers of all of these countries began publishing these things, one of the papers who held the archives material originally included the Guardian. They were headquartered in the United Kingdom and still are. And I remember reading a story, of course, I wasn't there personally. I'm getting the second hand. Who knows what we can rely on this the state of journalism as it is today. But they were approached by the British state who said, OK, OK, you've had your fun. You've done enough. Now it's time to stop. And they had to send their archival material away to the United States, to a partner publication because they no longer believe that they were safe to continue publishing and they were right. Agents of the British state went to the Guardian. They destroyed their laptop computers. They've got it on film, putting angle grinders to computer chips, trying to erase any trace that these stories had been written from within the confines of the newsroom. Now, Julian was not deterred by that, and he never would be. When you perform the level of surveillance against a person that has clearly been performed and is being performed even today, certainly in prison against Julian Assange, you understand at least something about that character. You understand what the breaking point is. You know what it'll take to make them bend. And he didn't bend. He will break before he does. He has consistently and continuously dared to speak the unspeakable in the face of opposition in the face of power. And that is a remarkable and rare thing. That is the reason that Julian Assange sits in prison today. If you love the truth, as I think everyone here does, you wouldn't be listening to this, you wouldn't be watching this, you wouldn't be participating in this, you wouldn't care about this unless something in you told you something important was happening here. And if you do care, as I think you do, you are a criminal of the same category as Julian Assange in the eyes of the state. What differentiates you, what divides you from him is only the degree. We share the same guilt. Each of us share in crime and we are unindicted co-conspirators in his quest to raise a lantern in the halls of power. Each of us shares in the forbidden desire to see justice done, not merely to the instruments of these darkest moments of the human condition that we've heard about all day here torture, extrajudicial killings, aggressive war. But to see justice done to their architects. And I have to say here. Each of us will also share, and to me, it will happen without the faintest regret, in his ultimate fate, if we do not stop what is happening now. What is happening to Julian Assange is a crime and he must be free. If we're going to free the world, we have to free Assange. Thank you. And stay free.

**END**