



"Journalism is NOT a crime" - Demonstration for Assange in London

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Stella Assange (SA): The British government is rightly calling for people with evidence of war crimes in Ukraine to step forward. They're rightly calling for investigations into war crimes. They're rightly calling for accountability for war crimes. While Julian revealed war crimes and I'll tell you a little bit about one war crime that doesn't get much attention- and I'm not talking about Collateral Murder, which you all know about- I'm talking about the shocking massacre in Iraq. A village in which 11 people in a house were executed. Bullets to the head. They were handcuffed. Four of them were women and five of them were children aged five and under. They were killed in a raid by the US military. And we know this because the UN wrote to the US government asking for an investigation, asking for information. And the US government just ignored them. That is an unpunished war crime committed by US military personnel in Iraq. And in fact, that event led to the Iraqi government ending the immunity deal that it had with the United States. It's important to remember that these aren't just publications in the abstract. These are tens of thousands of human casualties. Just imagine, visualise it. Piles and piles of human corpses that's what we're talking about. No accountability. And the only person who is suffering the consequences of these revelations is the person who did the right thing to put it into the public domain. Because the victims of war don't get any justice. The only justice they can hope for is for the truth of their victimhood being known. And by putting Julian in prison and trying to bury their record of their wrongdoing...

People gathered: [Cheering]

SA: ...Hi, everyone and thank you for being here on this important day to give the message loud and clear to Priti Patel and the Home Office and the entire British government that they should do the right thing. They should block this extradition. It is a political case and it has a political solution that is to end this now. Julian has done nothing wrong. He's been put in a British prison. The UK is imprisoning a journalist and for all the spin that is attempted this is

the press freedom case of the century and it's playing out in the middle of London. Priti Patel has the power to stop this. She should stop this. But actually the British government could stop this at any moment, even if she signs the papers because the extradition itself is in clear breach of Article four of the US - UK Extradition Treaty. They are acting in violation of this treaty by even entertaining it through the courts. So this has a political solution at any point. The political will of the British government will make all the difference here.

People gathered: Free Julian Assange. Free Julian Assange. Free Julian Assange.

Kristinn Hrafnsson: Thank you so much for being here today, it is an extremely important day. Today is the first day in a long time that this political case is finally in the hands of a politician. We've been in the courts for months and for years, and the proceedings in those courts have revealed one thing and one thing only: This is a political persecution. Julian is a political prisoner. And now Priti Patel has the life of Julian Assange in her hands. She can end this. This is why we are here to demand that she does the right thing, to end this persecution, stop this extradition. There are so many reasons that you can basically use and justify that right decision. The extradition treaty prohibitively bans extradition for political offences. Julian Assange is indicted for espionage, as ridiculous as it sounds. That is a political offence. That could stop right on that single premise. But there are so many others. What has been revealed is the violations against Julian's rights in the entire process, the spying on his legal meetings, the stealing of his legal documents, the plot to kidnap or kill him. There is enough evidence for Priti Patel to say enough is enough and stop this. There is so much at stake. Priti Patel might take this up in the cabinet with Boris Johnson, a former journalist himself. And discuss what will be the merit of the approach that the Foreign Office is now trying to present around the world. The United Kingdom is the vanguard of freedom of the press. They are promoting press freedom. What kind of a substitute is in for that kind of a message when Julian Assange is sitting whittling away in Belmarsh prison, it's meaningless. So it's a reputational issue. So let's unify in that demand to Priti Patel. Do the right thing. Stop this extradition. Stop it now. Don't extradite Julian Assange. Thank you.

Richard Burgon: Thanks very much, John. And it's great to see so many people out tonight taking a stand for fundamentally important principles. And those principles, though we know them well, are worth reiterating and they're worth considering by the home secretary in that building. The first principle is: Journalism is not a crime. Revealing war crimes is not a crime. And the third is: That rather than being a criminal, rather than being a villain, in reality, Julian Assange is a hero. And we should be paying tribute to him for the journalistic work he's done. For what he's revealed has been done in our name in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere. The idea that people could tolerate an award winning journalist being extradited to the United States to spend more than his whole life in a sentence behind bars is an absolute travesty. And we all need to speak up for journalism, for freedom of speech, for whistleblowing, and for extradition arrangements with the United States that are totally

imbalanced in the way they are. This would be a political extradition and political extraditions should not be taking place.

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