

Jeremy Corbyn & Stella Assange: Freedom for Julian Assange

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

Stella Assange (SA): Vivienne made this. It's about Julian. Vivienne has written point by point, the injustices about Julian's case. And we miss her dearly. Vivienne was such a courageous person and she was really a leader. And it got me thinking about how important and impactful courageous people are, you know, whether they're someone high profile like Julian or Vivienne Westwood or just a regular person. To have the capacity to lead and to compel. And campaigning isn't just about going on the march every few months. It's a daily thing. You know, it's about telling everyone you know. Finding the right occasion, and telling people about what you care about, why you care about it. Simple as that. It's not about slogans. I think recently there has been a lot of progress in the campaign. I mean, it's been building and building. And the October hands-around Parliament was absolutely amazing. And today, again, it has been extraordinary.

SA: I mean - I was looking back, you know, when we were behind the banner and as far as the eye can see, there was this incredible carnival. And I was watching the people who were just, you know, going out about the town on a Saturday evening. And they were - the response was so positive. Everyone was filming. They were trying to find out what it was about. They were engaged. You know, I think this carnival has had an enormous impact on central London today. So, yes, we were thousands marching and many thousands more who saw the message and who are now interested and want to find out more. So thank you.

SA: Tell all of your friends and colleagues and family about what a success this was today, and encourage them to come next time because we need to build and build until the moment is so big that those in power and the courts realise there's nowhere else to go but to free Julian.

SA: There's been some really wonderful events. The Belmarsh tribunal that Jeremy Corbyn was talking about was a huge success. The Press Club was ram-packed. You know, it was - and the speakers were fabulous. And I think Julian's case is impossible to ignore anymore. And it might be the case that for the media, this is being ignored here in this country but in a way, it's because it's bigger than them. They don't know how to talk about it because it is bigger than them. And then eventually, though, you know, we have the joint statement by the five publications, which is a huge step forward. And I think there's a complete consensus within the media that Julian should not be extradited and that he should be freed. But the media should be speaking louder. But regardless, WikiLeaks, 13 years ago, started a revolution in the media. And it became bigger than The Guardian, bigger than The New York Times, bigger than Der SPIEGEL. Right? And that's partly why Julian was attacked by those very publications in the beginning, because WikiLeaks journalism had surpassed by a longshot what those publications had achieved and how they were doing things. And it started a revolution that we can see now. There's so much independent media. People get their news from many sources, not just one, and not just the official one. And that's a healthy development. And that's in large part thanks to Julian. Julian, also through WikiLeaks, privileged the truth over commentary. Commentary is fine as long as it's based on the truth. So there have been many very good events. The Belmarsh tribunal, and I've been doing things like speaking to a very interesting organisation. It's small but has a very good purpose, which is to demilitarise education, to stop arms companies from funding research at universities.

SA: And there's also the environmental groups who have become aware of what WikiLeaks has done to publish, to expose how oil companies and so on are lobbying countries to take policies that are detrimental to the environment and to the countries - detrimental to each country's individual self-interest out of - well, for political expediency. So there are different movements that are becoming aware of Julian's importance and relevance of the WikiLeaks publications. And that actually, Julian's imprisonment is an attempt to punish the messenger for uncomfortable truths that affect all of us in many different areas of life. I think you probably most want to hear about how Julian's doing. He's in a difficult situation. And he's a very strong person and he's human. That means that there are good days and there are bad days. Good days is probably an overstatement, but sometimes it's easier to cope than others. Just this week we were on the phone and he told me that the cell above him had been flooding. So it was dripping into his cell. And specifically there were several leaks coming on to his bed. And I asked him, "well, how are you going to sleep?" Because the prison guards had put some buckets or something on the bed to collect the leaks. He had three buckets on the bed and they weren't all in one corner, they were like in different parts of the bed. And I said, "So how are you going to sleep?" And he said, "Well, maybe if I contort my body and do like an L-shape, then maybe I can sleep on the bed." And then the next day he said the water had evaporated, but had formed some stalagmites. So this kind of 'cementy' water had evaporated and then formed these like cement pyramids or something like that in these buckets. So that's Julian's day to day existence. That's what he has to deal with, apart from

fighting this enormous legal battle. And that's the reality of a place like Belmarsh. He shouldn't be there. And I think the reason - part of the reason - why the movement of freedom has so much force behind it, is because it goes to a very basic instinct. Because we are human beings, because we can reason, we can distinguish justice from injustice. And what Julian's going through, what's being done to Julian is such an enormous injustice that whoever is denying it is denying it because they are part of the problem, they are part of the one's who, for some reason and in some way, are taking part in his torture. I want it to end in an upbeat way. And that is that I am convinced that we will win this. There's no other way.

SA: Those in charge, they know it's a political case. The courts know this is a political case. It's a bit embarrassing for them, right? It's embarrassing because it is a political case. And now they have got themselves in a position where it's clear that the law has been abused, that the UK is keeping the most important political prisoner - well, the most famous and one of the most significant cases of political imprisonment in history is right here in London. And they have to find a way out. And the louder we shout and the more we grow, the quicker Julian will be released. So I ask you to keep on campaigning for Julian, not just in the protests, but day to day. Keep it on your mind, think about what you can do. And also, if you're not on the Don'tExtraditeAssange.com Email list, please sign up. Read Nils Meltzer's book *The Trials of Julian Assange*. Read Stefania Maurizi's book *The Secret Power* and stay engaged. And I'll see you again.

Kristinn Hrafnsson (KH): Thank you so much. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you to all the thousands that marched this afternoon in solidarity. We are joining forces, we are sending a signal to the world. And we are sending a signal of hope to Julian Assange in Belmarsh. This will be over soon. We are growing in numbers despite the fact that the media in this country is avoiding the topic, obviously. And if you want to know how many were actually marching this afternoon at the carnival, keep in mind that when we encircled the parliament. We had calculated that it would take at least 5000 people to form a human chain, which we have succeeded. And we have the evidence. It was a great achievement. Some of the local newspapers here in this city reported that a few hundred showed up. So if you want to know the real number of those who marched, look for the papers this evening or tomorrow and multiply it by four or five. That's probably closer to the truth. We are growing in number and the support is growing all around the world. We don't know what the next step will be in the courts here in the case of Julian. They are taking an awful long time in deciding whether they will hear this appeal or not. It is spurious, to say the least. I have long ago lost all faith that justice can be had in the courtrooms here. That will not just be enough to fight in the courts. And because we know that this is a political persecution that has to be solved through political pressure, WikiLeaks decided to go on a tour to Latin America in the last few weeks. We met policy makers, we met human rights activists. We met press freedom activists, artists and presidents in five countries. It was astonishing and refreshing to go through these countries and not be met with scepticism. All the media in these countries showed interest in

the topic. You did not have to convince anybody about the fact that it's not a conspiracy theory, but a fact that the CIA was plotting to kidnap and assassinate Julian Assange in 2017. People in Latin America know fully well what the CIA is capable of. We did not have to convince Lula da Silva, a month after he was elected president, that a massive lawfare was waged against Julian Assange. Lula da Silva himself spent more than 500 days in prison because of a lawfare. He knows - and there is documented evidence that the Department of Justice and other states have a hand in that lawfare against Lula. Now, he is president. He is a supporter of Julian Assange because he knows what he's up against.

KH: Jeremy mentioned López Obrador, the Mexican president, which we met. Joseph Farrell, my friend and colleague and I. And we sat with him for 2 hours. López Obrador has been a supporter of Julian for a long time. We met him a few days before a trilateral North American meeting was held in Mexico City. And the Mexican president met Joe Biden, and he did speak his mind on what he thought Biden, the president, should do in the case of Julian Assange. There's only one thing to do. Don't wait for the outcome of the extradition case in London. Just drop the charges. It's the only right thing to do. And the same message and the same understanding we felt that we got from Gustavo Petro, the president of Colombia. In a country where finally they have elected a progressive president. We also met with Arce, the president of Bolivia, who knows what we're up against and committed himself to full support. We met Alberto Fernández, the president of Argentina, who said, "Yes, we are for it. I will do anything individually and collectively to help Julian Assange." The same says vice president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. And we know of the support of other presidents, like Boric in Chile. And Xiomara Castro in Honduras. All the major countries south of the United States borders are now on the highest level supporting Julian Assange and the fight for his freedom. An entire continent. For we are not alone, we are not a few hundred people. We are millions! The combined population of these countries exceeds the population of the European Union, without a doubt the United Kingdom. And it is growing. We will go from continent to continent and we will spread the message. And I will assure you that more and more will come on board because there is an understanding, even though it's omitted, that this is a political persecution, a horrible one. A torture against one individual and it's the greatest threat against press freedom in our times. We have to fight! We have to fight against it.

KH: There is such an abundance of evidence to support the case that Julian Assange is a political prisoner and that he's politically persecuted. I mentioned the plan to kidnap or assassinate Julian in 2017. There was also the bugging in the embassy where his meetings with lawyers were recorded secretly and material, legally protected material, was stolen. There was a case in Madrid where the evidence has been presented in writing, and with testimony. Investigative judges in Madrid, they want to hear from Mike Pompeo, who was the head of the CIA in 2017 about his involvement in these crimes, because these are crimes. He is - certainly is - a criminal. But the Department of Justice in the United States has not even answered the authorities in Madrid, where they are sending a request that they want to take a witness statement from Mike Pompeo, who now has an ambition to be the next

president of the United States of America, so help us God. I am fascinated by the fact that we are having our books, all kinds of books where people are exposing themselves - I'm not going to name the one here from the prince. I haven't even read it, and I'm probably not going to do that. But another prince, yes the dark prince on the other side, Mike Pompeo has also published a book, I think about ten days ago. where he admits to the political nature of the persecution of Julian Assange. He admits it openly. He says, "I lobbied the Ecuadorian government as secretary of state of the US to hand over Julian Assange. I lobbied them." Well, we know what kind of lobbying that is. You might have seen the film *The Godfather*, where the godfather, Corleone, says "I made him an offer he couldn't refuse". That's the kind of lobbying they use against Ecuadorians, against that country. Sticks and carrots, we don't know what they threatened, we don't know what these sticks entailed; the offer which you cannot refuse. But we know what the other side of it was. Billions of dollars in aid to the despicable President Lenín Moreno, in that country who handed Julian over. Billions of dollars, that's a lot of carrots. And this is all admitted in a book by the former secretary of state and the former head of the CIA. And he admits in that book that he massively asked the CIA director as secretary of state, pushed the Department of Justice to issue an indictment against Julian and go after him, with full force. So much for the independence of the Department of Justice. So much for this to be just another legal case. It's a political persecution. You have it in black and white, you have it admitted by the former secretary of state. And don't bother buying the book. The best chapter will be in a legal document on a large file that will be presented in the court's extradition hearings when they finally happen. Thank you for this day. It gives me joy to see you here together. It gives me joy that we can send this message to Belmarsh Prison. We are on the winning side. We are on the right side of history. We are the ones who understand justice. You are the good people. We will win in the end. Thank you!

Jeremy Corbyn (JC): Thank you all for being here and thank you for showing your love and support. (Response to protestor:) I haven't gone away. My friend, I haven't gone away. I'm not going away anywhere. We are part of the same struggle for human rights, justice and peace all around the world. That's why we're here tonight. And I want to say thank you to all of you for being here tonight. Thank you for this wonderful platform we've got here tonight. And thank you for the joy of the carnival atmosphere and promoting the carnival in support of Julian. Because you win campaigns by gaining friends, you gain friends by going out in an exuberant musical, artistic way, as well as the very strong, very powerful intellectual and legal arguments that we've got to pursue. You have to campaign on all fronts, at all levels, all of the time to win justice for Julian Assange. That is what we're doing here. And it is the shame of most of the British media that they've completely ignored the whole issue. They don't seem to understand that one of the biggest media stories in the world was going on literally within a few metres of some of their offices when the court cases were going on. And no doubt many court cases in the future. They do not seem to understand that Julian's vilification by the US government, by the British government and by many others, is part of a strategy to divide people away from understanding what he's about and supporting his case.

Julian's crime - so called - was to tell the truth. Tell the truth about what US military power actually means, to tell the truth about what oppressive governments of all sorts do against their opposition, to tell the truth about the way in which big business is more interested in exploitation of the poorest countries in the world than preserving or protecting the environment or the human rights of the people that live in different places around the world. Julian's message and information is of crucial importance to good, decent people all around the world standing up for human rights and justice. But in the silencing of Julian - and that's what it's all about - it is also, in effect, the silencing of real journalists all around the world. Self-censorship takes over following the imprisonment of Julian Assange. The freedom of Julian Assange is the freedom for every real journalist all over the world.

JC: I had a quite moving experience when I was invited to go to Washington last month to join the Belmarsh tribunal that we held in the National Press Club in Washington. The National Press Club, within a few metres of the White House, of Congress and all the great institutions of the USA. And it was that place, that building, that room where Julian showed the footage of the US commanders instructing people to be killed without checking who they were, what they were and, we believe, knew perfectly well that they were wholly innocent civilians who were killed by high technology power. In this case it was Iraqis, but it could also be Afghan people, could also be Somalis. It could also be Yemen. It could also mean Palestinians. It could be people in all sorts of places in the world that Julian's skill and brilliance helped to expose the vile nature of what control actually means. And he showed it in that room. And that is why we had this event in the National Press Club. It was packed and it was live streamed to a lot of people all over the world. And whilst the British media and most of the British political establishment and elected politicians are not saying a great deal about Julian, it is not the case elsewhere. My good friend Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the president of Mexico, spoke out from the very beginning on this. And when I was in Mexico with him in January, last January, we went to his daily press conference, and he then dedicated a large chunk of his daily press conference to Julian's case. Raised it directly with Biden, and offered Julian - if he wanted it - sanctuary in Mexico. And because he set that example, others have joined in. And it was wonderful to see Lula Ignacio da Silva elected as president of Brazil and straightaway come out in support of Julian Assange.

JC: So you have the presidents of two very large, very important and populous countries of Latin America. You also have the support of President Petro in Colombia and many others. So we are building up international support for the campaign in the United States, in Australia, in Europe and many other places. And lastly, at the Council of Europe - which I'm a member of in Strasbourg, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - we had an event for Julian. I was not expecting it to be so successful, absolutely ram-packed to hear what Stella and others had to say. But that evening, those events at the National Theatre in Strasbourg were absolutely full, also. People want to hear Julian's story. They need to hear Julian's story. The personal story. Stuck in this horrible place, the Belmarsh Prison. Isolated, unable to act in any kind of normal way. And he is a remand prisoner. Normally, remand

prisoners are either released on bail or given pretty good conditions in order to await any kind of process. Julian is a remand prisoner in the most awful conditions, in the most maximum of maximum security prisons in this country. And then if - if - he is allowed to be removed to the United States, he will face a 175 year prison sentence. A death sentence. Because that is what it is. It's up to us now, around the world to raise the voice for Julian! And in raising that voice for Julian we are raising the voice for truth, for peace and justice around the world! And, you know what, this campaign is long, it's hard, it's detailed. And it's enormous pressure on Stella and all of those that are central to this campaign. So put your arms around them, give them the support, the love they need and deserve. And put your arms around everyone else to get them to join in this campaign to free this innocent man. That the truth may be told, of the way in which the poorest and most oppressed people in the world are treated. And I'll finish with this: When all the horrors of 9/11 happened, followed by the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan, trillions and trillions had been spent on military expenditure. Billions have gone into the war in Afghanistan. The troops and the military have now been withdrawn. Also left behind the poorest, most devastating place with the greatest denial of human rights of almost anywhere in the world. Military solutions don't usually work. It has to be about understanding the paranoia of those in power to protect their power, irrespective of the costs on innocent people who have no one to speak out for them. Julia spoke out for the innocent victims all around the world of unaccountable military power. Thank you, Julian, for all you did. Thank you for all of your support for this campaign. Let's get Julian out! Thank you.

END