



## Where is Julian Assange now? 4 Years After his Arrest

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

**Taylor Hudak (TH):** Today marks four years since the brutal arrest of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. On April 11th, 2019, Ecuadorian officials invited British police into the Ecuadorian Embassy to arrest Julian Assange after the government revoked his asylum. Shortly after, what was long suspected was then confirmed, the US was seeking Assange's extradition to face 18 charges related to the receipt and publication of classified material through WikiLeaks. The unprecedented move by the US to target a publisher caused alarm among press freedom advocates, human rights and civil liberties organizations.

**Reporters Without Borders:** So we're here as Reporters Without Borders just to call again for Julian Assange's release. We're really concerned about his persecution in connection with his contributions to journalism. We will be monitoring the hearing all week and it's not just our office here from the UK. We have an international delegation here. Our Secretary General, Christophe Deloire, the director of RSF Germany, Christian Mihr, to show that our concern is very international in this case. This is quite unusual for us to do, to be honest, to do this sort of trial monitoring mission in an established democratic country. This is more often something that we would do in countries that are further down our world Press Freedom Index. But this case is so concerning and the precedent that it has got so dangerous. We wanted to show a very serious international presence.

**TH:** Following the arrest Assange was incarcerated in England's most notorious prison, Belmarsh, where he remains to this day as the United States continues to seek his extradition. So how exactly did we get to this point? A point in which an award winning journalist faces a possible 175 years in a maximum security prison in the U.S. for publishing information in the public interest? Let's first go back to the very beginning.

**TH:** In 2006, Australian citizen Julian Assange founded WikiLeaks, an organization which allowed for whistleblowers to securely and anonymously disclose information which exposed

corruption, organized crime, human rights abuses, fraud and more. As editor of WikiLeaks, Julian Assange ensured that all publications were thoroughly vetted and included links to source documents. With this approach, WikiLeaks has had a 100% accuracy rate in reporting and has never had to retract a story. In 2010, when speaking about WikiLeaks, Assange said:

**Julian Assange:** To the question as to what sort of information is important in the world, what sort of information can achieve reform - and there's a lot of information, so information that organizations are spending economic effort into concealing. That's a really good signal that when the information gets out, there's a hope of it doing some good. Because the organizations that know it best, that know it from the inside out are spending work to conceal it. And that's what we've found in practice, and that's what the history of journalism is.

**TH:** Throughout the years, WikiLeaks published information exposing corruption, torture, mass spying, human rights abuses, toxic spills and contamination, trafficking and war crimes. Julian Assange and WikiLeaks worked with several media outlets around the world to publish this information, and Assange himself won more than 25 journalism awards for this work, the same journalistic work that the US government is seeking to criminalize. Following the arrest in April 2019, Assange was incarcerated in Belmarsh. The extradition hearings took place in February 2020 and then resumed in September and October that year in London before a magistrates court. The Crown Prosecution Service represented the US government and Assange had his own legal defense counsel. And again, just to keep this all clear, the US government is seeking Assange's extradition from England to the US to face 18 counts related to the receipt and publication of information. Now, several months after the conclusion of the extradition hearings in October 2020, the magistrate judge issued her decision on extradition on January 4th, 2021. And for many, the decision was a welcomed victory. The judge ruled against extradition, citing that it would be oppressive to extradite Assange under Section 91 of the UK Extradition Act of 2003. However, on all other matters, including the broader press freedom arguments, the judge ruled in favor of the US government. This had press freedom advocates deeply concerned, and the case was far from over. The Crown Prosecution Service representing the US government appealed the court's decision and a two day hearing was held in October 2021. Several months later in December the panel of three high court judges here in the case issued their decision in favor of extradition, thus overturning the lower court's initial ruling. Over the next several months, a few additional legal actions were taken. But eventually, in June 2022, then UK Home Secretary Priti Patel certified the extradition request. The certification was met with much disapproval from various NGOs. Amnesty International said that this move sends a chilling message to journalists around the world. Reporters Without Borders reiterated a similar sentiment that Assange's prosecution would set a dangerous global precedent. Yet there were still other legal options available. And in August 2022, Assange's defense, submitted its perfected grounds of appeal before the High Court of Justice. The defense also appealed to the European Court of Human Rights in July 2022, and on December 13 that year, a panel of three ECHR judges considered the application but determined that an appeal to the ECHR

cannot be heard at this time because of the ongoing proceedings in the UK. However, the panel stated that Assange could appeal again at a later time, should he, quote, be "dissatisfied in the future with the progress or outcome of the domestic procedures. It would be open to him to reintroduce his complaint", end quote. So to be clear, once again, Assange's application to appeal on eight other grounds, including those related to press freedom, which was filed in August 2022, is currently before the High Court in the UK. Julian Assange is still in Belmarsh Prison. And today, April 11th marks four years of his imprisonment. And the conditions in Belmarsh are extremely harsh and cruel, and his ability to communicate with the outside world is extremely limited. And his rights to visitation has become under scrutiny. Just recently, Reporters Without Borders was denied entry to visit Julian Assange, despite filling out all of the necessary paperwork prior and being granted official permission.

**Reporters Without Borders:** We followed all rules this morning, we were there very early with all required documentation. Without even checking our documentation, we were told that we would not be allowed in. The first official that we spoke to said that they had received, quote unquote, "intelligence", that we were journalists and therefore we would not be allowed to visit. No further discussion was possible. We were informed that the decision had been taken by the prison governor directly. We requested several times urgently to speak with the prison governor that was not responded to. Nobody should spend a single day in prison for publishing information in the public interest. In these prison walls Julian Assange has now become the most well-known political prisoner in the world, so we continue to campaign for his release as a global priority. That's what we wanted to discuss with him this morning.

**TH:** It is important to always remember that this case is about all of us and our ability to either report on or access information. And there are various actions that you can take to not only assure Assange's freedom, but also protect your right to know. You can politely put pressure on your representatives or MP's to end this prosecution. You can also visit [don'textraditeassange.com](http://don'textraditeassange.com) and [assangedefense.org](http://assangedefense.org) for more information on different actions that you can take, as well as various events in your area. Now, the summary of this case in this video just scratches the surface. And there is, of course, so much more detail that is related to the legal process and also related to Assange's and his treatment during the past ten plus years and the certain conditions that he would be subjected to if extradited to the United States. So for additional information on this case, please visit our video reports and our Julian Assange case updates playlist, as we have documented over the years since 2020, this case in great detail. And so, once again, I want to thank you all for watching today's video. Please be sure that you are subscribed to acTVism Munich, YouTube, Rumble and Telegram channels. And also please consider donating to our organization so we can continue with our independent news and analysis and also provide you the latest updates on this case. Now, you may have noticed my setup does look a little bit different in this video. To be honest, I am just on the road right now. So while things may not look as typical as usual, please note that in the next video everything will look the same. But I hope you still found this work interesting and

informative. I hope you will share it with those you know, and especially those who may not be too familiar with this case and need to understand what's really at stake here. So again, thank you for your support. I'm journalist Taylor Hudak and I'll see you guys next time.

**END**