



Julian Assange's Father Tells Glenn How He May Finally Go Free

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): Welcome to Brazil and thanks so much for taking the time to talk to us today.

Richard Brett Assange (RBA): Thanks, Glenn. It's been a real pleasure. I've known your work and face for many, many years. And of course, I had long conversations with Julian about Glenn Greenwald and contribution and how to work together and so on.

GG: Yeah, it's very nice of you to say and obviously I'm very supportive of the cause of having Julian's persecution stopped. And that's one of the things which we wanted to focus on. So other than getting some time to see this beautiful country. What is it that you've been doing here? What will you do here with the rest of your time in support of Julian's cause?

RBA: Well, principally, we're following events of the film Ithaka, which is about the activism for Julian Assange worldwide. So we just do a Q&A and develop arguments suitable to the country that you're showing the film in. So, for example, in the United States, we speak in the strongest of terms about the defence of the Bill of Rights and the First Amendment. In Brazil, we speak equally firmly about the BRICS and the and then the sunrise of the Latin American states.

GG: So the president of Brazil, the current President, Lula da Silva, has been a longtime defender of your son. He, going back to the earliest major leagues in 2010, when Lula was still president, praised those leaks as vital evidence of the war crimes of the United States and its allies around the world. He has been an outspoken defender in between the time he served as president then and ran for president successfully again now and continues to depict Julian's prosecution as persecution, very strongly condemning the Biden administration and the British government for keeping Julian locked up. Have you been able to have contact with his government, with officials in his government, either in Brasilia or around the country? And if so, what have you been able to hear from them?

RBA: Well, we met with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was very helpful and took half an hour for the meeting and then engaged in photo opportunities which he pumped out into the Internet and to the news services through his facilities. So that was very good. But the principal thing is to generate support as a crystallised support within the population. Because we understand that politicians and politics rest upon the will of the people, so to speak, particularly in the sense of votes. And the affection for Julian in Latin America is profound. We also have President Obrador of Mexico as a very strong supporter. Together, those two men have moved the persecution of Julian up, and now it's become a diplomatic matter between nations.

GG: This is a story I've been covering for a long time. I would say I covered WikiLeaks almost from the very beginning, even before those leaks I just mentioned. It enabled me to develop a real sense of admiration for Julian and his work and ultimately our friendship. So it's something I've been very interested in on numerous levels over these many years. And the thing that seems to me at least to be most significant in terms of what has changed is that your government and his, the Australian Government, people forget Julian has never been a citizen of the United States, nor is he one now he's a citizen of Australia, finally is speaking out in defence of the rights of its citizen. The Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, he several times has said things in pretty strong terms like, "Enough is enough, it's time for this to come to a conclusion". How sincere do you think those public objections are on the part of the Australian Government and how much do you think they're doing in reality to pressure their American allies just to free Julian?

RBA: Terrific question. Well, in the first place, the last election, which elected Anthony Albanese and the Labour government, the left government, into power, we used the nomenclature that it was an Assange election. Such as support for Julian, it's around about 88% of the population.

GG: In Australia.

RBA: In Australia. They want him returned home. So Anthony Albanese's job, to a certain extent, depends upon saying positive things about Julian. And we understand that in politics, words are actions. So when he says that he expects these things to be brought to a conclusion, and wishes so, I understand that that becomes a diplomatic matter for the relationship between the United States and Australia. To the extent that Caroline Kennedy has had a meeting with a delegation of Australian parliamentarians and at that meeting said that there is not really a diplomatic matter except for me as a representative of the United States to be talking to you. It's a legal matter. But as I understand it, this is quoting "as I understand it, there's the maximum that Julian can receive for computer intrusion is 60 months, and he has more or less of that time now". So we, from that, understand that somebody is offering a deal.

GG: Someone inside the US Justice Department is offering a kind of plea bargain, which is

something I've heard as well. I was going to ask you about I don't know how reliable that was, but is that essentially what you're referring to, that there's a plea deal for Julian to plead guilty in exchange for essentially being declared to have served the maximum time already for that crime?

RBA: Yes. Yes. Yeah. But I'd formulate a little bit different than a plea deal. I see it as a diplomatic arrangement between the United States and Australia to run with something that gets them both out of the diplomatic circumstances of conflict between Australia and the United States and puts the weight on the victim to accept.

GG: Before I ask you about that and I want to probe that a little bit; the amazing thing is the relationship between the United States and Australia has actually become much more important now than ever before as a result of the United States focus on China and the Pacific. Australia has become, I was just reading an article this week in *The Economist*, central to the US military posture with regard to China. They want to build military bases. They are building military bases, in fact in Australia, promising Australia all sorts of things. So there is very serious negotiations, very serious trading and going on between those two countries at the highest priority in terms of government. You would think just as a matter of national dignity, that Australia would have more than enough leverage if they were serious. And that's why I'm asking how sincere this is, other than just a need to assuage the population politically, to extract that as a kind of victory that the Australians can show to the population, that we are not just a vassal state to the United States, that it is an actual partnership of equals.

RBA: Yeah, I take that point; but again, I look at it slightly differently that these arrangements take a while to put in place. And the United States over the last 13 years has put so much effort into the persecution of Julian and the profile of that effort and also the usefulness of the threat and intimidation and oppression of potential publishers and journalists. And also I instinctively see that certain sections of the United States administration want to remove the capacity of the First Amendment to protect publishers and, well, protect everybody within the United States on free speech matters.

GG: So let me get back to that issue of the potential plea bargaining as a way out for both the US and Australia. Where Australia gets to say, we got our citizens back and the US gets to say we convicted Julian Assange of crimes to which he's pled guilty and that vindicates what we were doing all along. I don't think anyone can judge whatever Julian does. He has been in an effective prison in the Ecuadorian embassy for eight years first, and now he's been in a very harsh prison in Belmarsh for what is it going on? Four plus years after more than a decade of his life consumed by this battle. At the same time, I visited Julian, I believe, in 2018, and although that was the last time I spoke to him and saw him in person, that he was definitely affected by what was going on. He was also very, very determined and principled at the same time. He's obviously somebody who made a choice in life to confront the world's

most powerful people and understood what that would likely entail. Is that something you think he would be willing to do, namely plead guilty to crimes that having known everything that I know about this case, he actually did not commit as a way of finally getting out of detention in prison?

RBA: I can't say, Glenn. I can't say. I think it's very difficult to answer that. I mean, I only can answer it from within my own personality, character and imagination. However, what I can say is that the circumstances of placing the onus of solution on the victim are not comfortable. And the second is that every single human right due process conventions of asylum have been abrogated in the case of Assange. The person Julian Assange, is now offered an arrangement whereby he has to entrust the United States after his experience, after 13 years of experience of the United States and the Department of Justice, trust them to their word. Well, this is really very difficult.

GG: But by that you mean the arrangement would be he would go back to the United States, stand trial or appear in a federal court in the United States in order to plead guilty and then trust their word that based on that plea deal, he would then be released back to Australia. Is that the trust element you're talking about?

RBA: Well, that's one of them. You know, travel to the United States is just out of the question. You can't put yourself in the hands of people who are obviously trying to kill you, but that's one. And the second one is that they say, Oh, okay, you can go home to Australia, off you go. And then the minute you get to Australia, Oh, but we forgot this charge, we neglected to do this and so on and so forth, continue to hand you to the end of your days. Well I imagine what is possible for Julian to utilise is that the support for a solution to this matter continues to grow a diplomatic arrange. So a little bit of patience may bring a benefit. I mean other people say to me, Oh, you know, there's a window or there is a door, there's a door opening or there's a window opening and it'll close soon. You have to make a decision and all this sort of stuff. But I do see the activity by President Lula and President Obrador, in concert with the interests of Australia, will bring a proper solution. I don't mean by that, you know that the United States sort of apologises and says, we're terribly sorry we made a mistake here. But I see this possibility that the White House requests the Department of Justice to review the espionage charges under the auspices that it endangers, it embarasses the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

GG: The hypotheses I've had for some time now, and I'm wondering what you think of it, is that there is no interest at all that the Biden administration has in bringing Julian Assange to American soil, putting him on trial in a federal courthouse in the eastern district of Virginia, which is where he would be tried, allowing that media circus to distract from everything that Joe Biden would want to be doing, enabling Julian to go on the stand, having the world know that Joe Biden is trying to become the first ever president to prosecute a publisher under the Espionage Act, allowing every foreign leader, as they already do, to point to this case,

whenever the United States tries to use a soft power to criticise those other governments. That what they really wanted is what they've gotten, which is the destruction of WikiLeaks, the incapacitation, physically and mentally of Julian for all these years. And they actually want a way out. They've been very happy with it winding its way through the British court system where Julian's just kept there and not brought– but I can't envision a scenario where they actually want to bring Julian to the US and have him stand trial. Do you agree with that?

RBA: Yeah, very much. Very much. I mean there's a firm of attorneys in Washington that charged \$1.2 million to Wau Holland, which is a free press and a charitable organisation based in Germany. Now, should those firm of attorneys find a solution, they get paid 1.2 million. Okay. But the government will give them contract after contract in the hundreds of millions. So we understand that those that find a solution to this matter for the government will be given benefits. Yeah, so I agree with that scenario, except this. If we look at it, the United States has destroyed over the last 21 years, seven and a half countries. Brown University says 4.6 million people direct deaths. Brown University, the other study says 38 million refugees. We cannot in any way advocate good conscience or good faith to the certain aspects of that administration. Those aspects of the administration, the deep state, if you want to call the FBI, the CIA, and NSA, are the people who are bringing this persecution. So they are very capable, imaginative, and in some cases malign natures, and they would find a way to exercise their desires. That's the counter argument to that they really do want a way out of this bloody mess that they made for themselves. But other actors see the way out of the messes that they continue to make or the tragedies that they embark upon, catastrophes that they administer, they see the way out as raising the ante.

GG: I'll tell you a story that always made such an impression on me, and at the time I wasn't even entirely convinced of it. This is before I had my own entanglements with the United States government that proved how true it was. But one of the earliest participants in the WikiLeaks project, one of the people who worked on that 2010 release of the Iraq and Afghanistan war logs, diplomatic cables, is a true believer in the cause, visited Brazil. He was a citizen of a European country, and he told me he had decided that he was going to step down and no longer participate in what WikiLeaks was doing, not because he in any way believed less in the project. To the contrary, he believed in it more than ever in its power to bring transparency. But he told me he wasn't at all afraid that one day his government was going to knock on his door and say, We have a lot of problems with what you're doing. He was worried that one day his government was going to knock on his door and say, the United States government has a problem with what you're doing and we're here to bring you to them and to put you into their custody. And I think sometimes American citizens, even people in the West, have a hard time understanding that when you say things like they're capable of doing anything, it sounds like a sort of conspiratorial or kind of hyperbolic assessment of the United States government. But as somebody who is a member of Julian Assange's family, or who has seen that up close as myself, who has seen it up close of my source, Edward Snowden, and the kinds of things I know they didn't just do, but were planning on doing to

both of them. Do you see them as such a rogue kind of entity that you don't trust anything that they say or do, even if it is kind of, it seems like it's consecrated by law?

RBA: Just to return to your strong point about the strategic nature of the relationship with Australia and Australia's strategic position in the unfolding competition between the United States and China. And that is significant. And that matter will bring the United States to the sorry – there's really good people in the United States, so I don't want to say... The administration to the understanding that finding a way out of this to the satisfaction of the Australian populace and government is a good idea because if we take just one example all of the strategic lines of communication which serve as Indonesia, China, India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the Gulf, all of them travel across the Indian Ocean. Australia as a stable ally of the United States, or if you want to say a stable vessel, sits on the Indian Ocean and monitors the entirety of those strategic lines of communication. This is a profound advantage to the United States in its competition with those three nations. So under the power politics understanding, which you delivered your mind to earlier in our conversation, I think the solutions are within that, making those arrangements clearly. And the White House simply saying that, Oh well, we have an election coming up, we must give consideration to the efficacy and the profound benefit of the First Amendment to the people of the United States. So we're asking for a review of these charges against Julian Assange, and that will simply make it fade away. Some people will jump up and down and say, you could have done that ten years ago. However, the circumstances I would say hadn't unfolded to the extent that we understand now that the First Amendment needs to be supported.

GG: Last question. The alleged source for the publications that Julian is charged with, having participated in, Chelsea Manning received a very lengthy prison sentence, and after eight years in a really harsh prison facility, I visited her there in the military brig in Fort Leavenworth in the middle of Kansas, President Obama commuted her sentence on humanitarian grounds, essentially saying she had served such a harsh time it was kind of time just to let her out on humanitarian grounds. There have been reports from Julian's doctors over the years that he has deteriorated physically. He's deteriorated mentally. They have questions about whether he could survive a US prison. They have said they have real doubts about whether or not they could. What do you think, given everything Julian has been through, the way in which – I don't like saying that they broke him because knowing Julian, I don't think they have. But they've certainly done a very good job of strongly impeding WikiLeaks and Julian's work, needless to say. What is the motive, do you think, of the part of the government that continues to insist that he be pursued and punished and imprisoned and broken until the very end?

RBA: It's pretty clear they don't want Glenn Greenwald to take up a position with the imminence of, let's say, The New York Times in the distribution of information and knowledge into the United States. And as a consequence, being in English, to reverberate around the world. They want you to worry, which, you know, is, I think, been pretty effective

in corporate media.

GG: You don't mean effective in terms of me specific of it. You mean in terms of media.

RBA: To make it clear in terms of corporate media. They've repressed corporate media. We see that all the time. However, there's 50,000 others now that churn out information and there's high points in that 50,000, Glenn Greenwald and others, say Matt Taibbi and so on, who are making the running now. And just the other day I saw Tucker Carlson go to 195 million views of his conversation. He never got more than 6 million on Fox. So that's the new world that's appeared before our eyes. And I hope that Julian can be welcomed back into it.

GG: I hope so, too. And I don't think I've ever been more optimistic that we're coming to a resolution. It sounds like at least with caution, you have that same view. So hopefully Julian will be out and free and doing what he does best. Shortly, I hope your trip here in Brazil helps that cause as well. And I really— let me just ask, because there is usually an attempt by people who hear this and most of the viewers of our show by definition support independent media, support the idea that people are supposed to be adversarial to the US government, people who do support Julian's cause, what is it that they can do to help?

RBA: Well, just two things. One is the *lógos*; continue to speak about the matter, and in particular the attempted destruction of the First Amendment of the United States in relationship to Julian Assange. That's one. The other is to speak to Congress people. I mean, they depend upon citizens of the United States for their living and they must adjust their policies to circumstance.

GG: Well, thank you again for the great work you're doing and thanks for taking the time on a Sunday to sit down and talk to us. I really appreciate it.

RBA: Thanks, Glenn. It is just the wrong man sitting in the chair. It should be Julian.

GG: It will be shortly. I'm convinced of that.

GG: Thanks for watching this clip from System Update, our live show that airs every Monday through Friday at 7 p.m. Eastern, exclusively on Rumble. You can catch the full nightly shows live or view the backlog of episodes for free on our Rumble page. You can also find full episodes the morning after they air across all major podcasting platforms, including Spotify and Apple. All the information you need is linked below. We hope to see you there.

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