



Media Apathetic as Assange Faces “Life or Death” Extradition Appeal

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

Glenn Greenwald: So one of the cases that obviously gives the lie to all of the feigned indignation of what's happening in Russia with Alexei Navalny is the case of Julian Assange. Julian Assange, for those of you who don't recall, is the founder of WikiLeaks, which in my view, pioneered journalism by becoming the first outlet to realise the future of journalism in the digital age, would come in a large part by large scale leaks that would be a real vulnerability to the most powerful institutions that want to shield what they're doing from the public. And the ability to leak large amounts of digital information and do so anonymously, which is what WikiLeaks enabled, ended up leading to some of the most important stories in the last 15 to 20 years in journalism. Some of the biggest, most consequential stories have come from WikiLeaks and then enabled, by this WikiLeaks model, where other journalists were able to report using sources who followed a similar model. And that's exactly what makes Julian Assange an enemy of the state. And the Obama administration was eager and desperate, led by Hillary Clinton, especially, to try and find a way to prosecute Julian Assange because of his 2010 release of huge amounts of documents proving U.S. war crimes in the Iraq and Afghanistan war, and also the release of diplomatic cables that showed corruption on the part of U.S. allies throughout the Middle East and all kinds of deceit and corruption. It revolutionised how people thought about their governments in many places around the world. They convened a grand jury, and what they concluded, the Obama administration did, was that there was no way to prosecute Julian Assange for publishing that information unless it would also prosecute The New York Times and The Guardian for publishing that information as well. Media outlets publish classified information all the time. It's crucial to your job as a journalist. Obviously, if the government doesn't want you to know something about crimes they're committing or deceit they're engaging in, they're going to make those secrets, those documents, that prove their lies and crimes secret. They're going to make it illegal to disclose them. Sometimes those secrecy designations are valid as a way of protecting U.S. security from things that shouldn't be public, but often what they're protecting is not American security, but their own reputations, their own ability to commit crimes and lie to the public. That's what journalism is for. And the Obama administration was desperate to find a way to say that Julian Assange did something other than what media outlets do,

namely, receive classified information. And they tried, and they tried and tried and ultimately concluded that there was no way to prosecute Julian Assange without essentially ending press freedom in the United States, without creating theories that would justify criminalising any journalism.

What happened was when Donald Trump was elected, one of the worst mistakes he made was empowering Mike Pompeo, first as the director of the CIA and then as Secretary of State. And Mike Pompeo gave a speech very, very early in the Trump administration, where he said one of the top goals of his CIA was going to be to destroy WikiLeaks and destroy Julian Assange, and particularly put an end to their ability to claim free speech and a free press. And good to his word, the Trump Justice Department, one of the worst acts of the Trump administration, actually indicted Julian Assange under a theory that if it's accepted would end up giving the power to the state to imprison essentially all forms of investigative journalism for reasons I'm about to show you. And the Biden Justice Department once Joe Biden assumed office in 2021 they were encouraged and urged by every civil liberties and press freedom group, literally in the West, to drop this prosecution on the grounds that it is the gravest threat to press freedom in years. And they ignored it and they've continued for three years over even the objections of the Australian government, the country of which Assange is a citizen, and has said, No, we want to bring him to the United States. He's already been in prison for five years in the UK. The only crime of which he was ever convicted was bail jumping, which they said he did when he sought asylum from the Ecuadorian Embassy in 2012. He served an 11 month sentence for bail jumping that is long ago served; that term. The only reason he continues to be in the U.S. [British] jail – and it is a maximum security tough prison that the BBC has called the British Guantanamo; it has terror suspects there, very high level criminals – is because the U.S. has demanded his extradition to the U.S., and the British government refuses to release him on bail pending this extradition. He's in prison for almost five years, without being convicted of any crime beyond bail jumping.

Now he has tried over and over in the British courts to fight his extradition to the United States, because he knows that if he's transferred to the United States – if you have a third grade civics understanding of the United States, you may think, Oh, he's going to get a fair trial. He'll have a lawyer, and he can prove his innocence to the court and then walk free. None of that is going to happen. He's being charged under a law, the Espionage Act of 1917, one of the most draconian laws ever enacted. The purpose of it was to criminalise dissidents under the Woodrow Wilson administration, to opponents of having the U.S. get involved in World War One. And they prosecuted people under espionage laws, as spies, for doing nothing other than opposing Woodrow Wilson's policy of involving the United States in World War One. It's one of the oldest and most repressive acts. And he's going to be transferred to Northern Virginia, tried in a Northern Virginia court, which is the home of every military contractor and CIA operative and the entire U.S. security state with its base in Northern Virginia. That's why they try these national security cases in Northern Virginia. And his conviction is basically guaranteed. And he will be put in an American prison, a harsh American prison for national security crimes. And Julian Assange's doctors and independent, mental health and physicians have already said that he is at the verge of and has often almost

collapsed into full mental destruction. And he's very physically fragile as well. And the argument is that there's no way for him to survive, transferred to and then standing trial in the United States and then being put in an American prison. And under British law, that's supposed to be a basis for refusing extradition. He won on that argument in the first instance of his judicial process. And then every other court since has refused to entertain that argument, has rejected it. This week, starting tomorrow and the day after, he's going to have his appeal heard in Britain's highest court. It's his last chance in the British judicial system to avoid extradition. We're going to be reporting live or, based on our ability to get the hearings, to listen to the hearings, we're going to be telling you and reporting on what's happening as this last ditch effort to avoid imprisonment in the United States begins.

Here from the AP today: *WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange may be near the end of his long fight to stay out of the U.S.* Quote, "Assange faces what could be his final court hearing in London starting Tuesday as he tries to stop his extradition to the United States. The High Court has scheduled two days of arguments over whether Assange can ask an appeals court to block his transfer. If the court doesn't allow the appeal to go forward, he could be sent across the Atlantic. Assange, 52, an Australian computer expert, has been indicted in the U.S. on 18 charges over WikiLeaks' publication of hundreds of thousands of classified documents in 2010. Among the files produced, published by WikiLeaks was video of a 2007 Apache helicopter attack by American forces in Baghdad that killed 11 people, including two Reuters journalists. A judge in London initially blocked Assange's transfer to the U.S., on the grounds that he was likely to kill himself if held in harsh American prison conditions. But subsequent courts cleared the way for the move after U.S. authorities provided assurances he wouldn't experience a severe treatment that his lawyers said would put his physical and mental health at risk. Stella Assange and her husband's supporters have criticised assurances as being meaningless because they are conditional. Lawyers for Assange planned to argue he can't get a fair trial in the U.S. that a U.S.-UK treaty prohibits extradition for political offences and that the crime of espionage was not meant to apply to publishers." If Julian Assange stands trial for these crimes, he will be the first ever publisher of information to be imprisoned by the United States government on charges of espionage. They have traditionally charged the sources of information to the people who work inside the government, and then pass it on to journalists, people like Daniel Ellsberg and Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden. They have never once charged the entity or the person who publishes the information. He's in the role of a journalist, someone who gets information like we got information from Edward Snowden, like the New York Times got information from Daniel Ellsberg in the Pentagon Papers case. And this would be the first ever prosecution of a journalist, of a publisher for publishing classified information, rather than just the person who passed it to him.

Now to say that there were huge stories in the WikiLeaks release in 2010 is to understate the case. One of the reasons why so many journalists hate Julian Assange is because he has broken more big stories than all of them combined, and he's done so without ever working within the confines of corporate media. They don't consider him one of them, even though he's infinitely more of a journalist than they could ever be. One of the reasons they hate him is because he shines a light on who they really are. They don't break stories like this ever.

They don't have no interest in breaking stories like this because they're spokespeople and propagandists for U.S. power centres, not journalists adversarial to them. And Assange is living proof of what they are. And they hate him for it. And that's why they're so upset about Alexei Navalny, and perfectly content to watch Julian Assange die in person at the hands of their own government.

Here is an article I wrote back in 2010 at Salon magazine, where I was writing back then: *The war on WikiLeaks and why it matters*. "The U.S. government escalates its campaign to harass and destroy a key whistle-blowing site." And I went through all kinds of articles, all kinds of stories, one after the next of stories that were broken, major stories that were broken from these WikiLeaks publications, which was the reason the U.S. government was so enraged by what WikiLeaks did. He basically did ten years worth of actual journalism all at once. Now, I told the story many times of what has happened in the Julian Assange case. And if you want to get all the details, you can read the Substack article that I published in December of 2021, entitled *The Kafkaesque Imprisonment of Julian Assange and How It Exposes Us Myths about Freedom and Tyranny*. And the main point I tried to make there is that the real measure of how free a society is is not how its mainstream, well-behaved, ruling class servants are treated, but the fate of its actual dissidents. And that's where you could actually make the case that Alexei Navalny was doing something that dissidents do, which was criticising his own government. And that's the reason why Russians should be angry at their own government for allowing someone like that to die. We have a similar case, many similar cases, but one major one where our own government is attempting to extradite somebody to the United States whose only crime was receiving information in the public interest. They worked with major media outlets like The New York Times and The Guardian in order to publish these stories, and the United States government wants to imprison this person; just destroyed in so many ways. He's been in a prison for five years, but for seven years prior to that, he had asylum in Ecuador.

Remember what happened was, in 2012, while the U.S. government was desperate to get their hands on him, two women in Sweden suddenly claimed that they were the victims of sexual assault, victimised by Julian Assange. And Julian Assange was more than willing to go to Sweden to confront those accusations. And the only thing he and his lawyers wanted was an assurance from the Swedish government that they wouldn't use his presence on Swedish soil to turn Assange over to the United States. Sweden is a small country, dependent on the United States, has a history of doing what the United States tells it to do. And he was more comfortable in the U.K., where he thought there's at least some judicial independence. And he was very scared that going to Sweden would just be a pretext to get him into custody and have the Swedish turn him over to the Americans. And that was the reason the Ecuadorian government gave him asylum; was to protect him from persecution from the United States, which at the time people said, Oh, it's a conspiracy theory, that the United States is trying to get their hands on Assange. That's just his excuse to avoid going to Sweden. But the Ecuadorian government told the Swedish government, we will withdraw our asylum immediately. He will get on the next plane to Stockholm, as long as you give him his assurances that you won't extradite him to the United States. And it was because they refused

to do that Ecuador concluded that his political rights were endangered, and they therefore not only had the right, but the duty to give him asylum, which they gave him and that was why he was in the Ecuadorian embassy for all those years.

I visited Julian Assange in 2017 in London. It's basically a one room apartment in the middle of a high rise in London. No outdoor space. He couldn't leave the embassy. If he did, the London police were outside waiting the entire time to arrest him. That was seven years of not getting any sunlight, of not seeing the light of day. You could watch him physically deteriorating. And obviously going to a high security prison in the UK, where his doctors have said that his physical health and his mental health are in severe danger has made it all the worse. If you care about civil liberties, what you're talking about is not what the Russian government is doing, but what your own government is doing. Now I just want to make the point this way about why this is so dangerous. Because the theory that they're using is they're saying, Look, Assange did something that media outlets that he worked with didn't do. They just received the information passively, whereas he worked with his source, Chelsea Manning, and actually encouraged her to get more information and also helped her to hide by doing things like telling her how to crack a password that she never wasn't able to crack to hide her tracks, and that once he did that, once he worked with his source, didn't just passively receive information, but encouraged her to get more and tried to help her avoid detection, that he then became a conspirator in her crimes. That's what he's being charged with. And in 2019, when the indictment was released, I wrote this op-ed in the Washington Post, and the headline of it was: *The indictment of Julian Assange is a blueprint for making journalists into felons*. And the subheadline was: "The First Amendment is meaningless if it only protects people the government recognises as journalists". And the argument I was trying to make there that I did make in this Washington Post article, was that what Julian Assange is accused of doing is something that all investigative journalists do. If you're an investigative journalist and you get a source who comes to you and says, here's information that I think you should have, no investigative journalist of any worth is just going to possibly take that information and then walk away. They're going to say, Oh, this is really interesting. Is it possible for you to get this also and for you to get this also? That would really complete the story. Every investigative journalist actively works with their source that way. And it's not only the right, but the duty of an investigative journalist when working with their source, to encourage them to use protective measures to avoid getting caught. So if the source calls you, for example, on an open phone line and you're a journalist and says, Oh, hi, I'm at the NSA, I have a bunch of classified documents I want... You're going to interrupt and say, Don't call me in an open phone line. Use an encrypted platform. Go to Signal. Talk to me on Signal. Let's use encryption so that you don't get caught. If you go to the front page of the New York Times, The Washington Post, or any other major news outlet, they will have information on how sources can contact them and do so without getting detected by the government. They'll help their sources avoid detection, which is what Julian Assange is accused of doing.

And so if the government succeeds in prosecuting Julian Assange under an Espionage Act, which is my argument in the Washington Post, for doing things that every investigative journalist does, it will give the government the power to criminalise investigative journalists

everywhere. That's what makes it so dangerous. And what's so amazing about this op ed that I wrote, I wrote it in May of 2018, in June of 2018, I was contacted by a source in Brazil who gave me a major archive of hacked messages between top prosecutors in Brazil that enabled me to do groundbreaking reporting that changed the course of Brazil and its political dynamic. It proved that the prosecution of Lula da Silva, the former president, the now current president who was in prison at the time, was actually corrupt. It undid a lot of prosecutions that released Lula from prison. And at the end of our reporting Brazilian prosecutors loyal to the justice minister brought felony charges not only against my source, but also against me. They charged me with something like 18 felony counts that would have put me in prison for something like 214 years, had I been convicted. And the theory that they used about why they could not only charge my sources, but also me, even though I played no role in the obtaining of this information – all the information was obtained by the time they came to me, I had no idea it was being done. I didn't participate in any way other than receive the information and report on it. The theory they used to try and prosecute me was exactly the one the U.S. government is using to try and turn Julian Assange into a criminal. Namely, that they had a transcript of my conversation with the source in which I told the source – the source said to me, Oh, do you want me to throw away all of the conversations we're having? Or do you want me to keep them? And I said, Oh, it doesn't matter. You can throw them away if you want, because we're keeping all of the copies. And the British [Brazilian] prosecutors interpreted that as my encouraging my source to get rid of information that could have incriminated him or me, and that by doing so I became a co-conspirator. And they also tried to claim that I asked the source for more information than they gave me. And by doing that, I became part of the conspiracy.

Now, in my case, Western media outlets, every last one of them, denounced the attempt to prosecute me, claiming that they would criminalise my journalism. The New York Times editorialised in my favour. Every major media outlet in the West did, probably because at the time Brazil was governed by Jair Bolsonaro, right wing president. The Western media hated Bolsonaro, even though Bolsonaro wasn't really responsible for my prosecution. It was more prosecutors loyal to his justice minister. So it was amazing. I wrote this warning in the Washington Post, and then the next month I found myself in exactly that position, which every investigative reporter finds himself in when you're doing a big story, where you encourage your sources to get more information. And that's what investigative journalists do every day. And if they can prosecute Julian Assange for that, they will obtain the power to criminalise investigative journalism itself. And that is what makes this story so important. And yet here are people in the American media – here is Julia Ioffe, who is a hardcore anti-Russian fanatic. And here she is exploiting Navalny's death. Quote: "This was what Navalny brought to Russia: a ray of optimism and humor to a dark and cruel place, reminding Russians they can be good, better". Here is the same person, responding to her own government's repression of a journalist who is a thousand times the journalist that she will ever be, even if she lives to be 10,000 years old. "How appropriate that after years in the Ecuadorian Embassy, Julian Assange has come to look like an older Russian man".

If you trust these people that they're being authentic and sincere when they tell you that they care about freedom of speech and the freedom to dissent in Russia and that's the reason why we need to go to war with Russia and that's the reason why we need to finance the war with Ukraine, all you have to do is look at what their reaction is when allied governments in the United States kill dissidents or kill Americans, or allow people like Gonzalo Lira to die in prison, or try and prosecute and destroy and kill Julian Assange. They laugh about it. They don't care about it. If anything, you would think American journalists would care more about the repressive acts of their own government, since they can actually do something about that than they would about the acts of a country on the other side of the world, in which they have no influence. You would think at least it would be equal. And yet they don't care at all if there's no propagandistic value to it. This is why the Alexei Navalny story is so important. And the other aspect of it, I just want to say before concluding, is that there's kind of a psychological aspect to moments like these where we're all, as human beings, very tribal creatures. We evolved with tribes. We needed tribes in order to survive. That's the reason why societal scorn and societal exclusion can be such a powerful motivator, because we're built in our DNA to avoid being expelled from our tribe, that used to mean death, and we evolved as tribal creatures. And moments like this where we all get to unite as a tribe, as Americans and point over to the other side of the world and say, Look at that bad country, look at how terrible they are, the evil they are, how repressive they are, implicit within that is that claim that we're good. We're better. It's a crucial, propagandistic moment to keep people happy with their own government, with their own system of power under which they live. And you can see how important it is, how angry people get if you object to it or challenge it, because it's such a moment of tribalistic affirmation. And it would be one thing if there was authenticity to it, and this was being done as a way of saying we shouldn't copy Putin. We shouldn't repress our own dissidents. We shouldn't allow our allied states to kill our own citizens for political ends. But the fact that there's none of that shows the fraud of all of this. And even if you think that what Vladimir Putin did to Alexei Navalny is exactly what the U.S. government claimed, and even if you think it's an immoral act, it's still crucial that you understand the reason that's being shoved down your throat. And the uses to which it's being put to make you forget about or justify the very similar acts done not only by our allied governments, but by our own government as well.

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.

END

Thank you for reading this transcript. Please don't forget to donate to support our independent and non-profit journalism:

BANKKONTO: Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V. Bank: GLS Bank IBAN: DE89430609678224073600 BIC: GENODEM1GLS	PAYPAL: E-Mail: PayPal@acTVism.org	PATREON: https://www.patreon.com/acTVism	BETTERPLACE: Link: Click here
---	--	--	---

The acTVism Munich e.V. association is a non-profit organization with legal capacity. The association pursues exclusively and directly non-profit and charitable purposes. Donations from Germany are tax-deductible. If you require a donation receipt, please send us an e-mail to: info@acTVism.org