

Ambassador Richard Wood
British Embassy
0244 Oslo

Oslo, 3 June 2019

Norwegian press freedom organizations urge the British Government to dismiss the U.S. extradition request of Julian Assange

Norwegian PEN, the Norwegian Press Association, the Norwegian Union of Journalists and the Association of Norwegian Editors are concerned about the fact that Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks leader, has been indicted by the U.S. Justice Department on 17 counts for violating the Espionage Act. His alleged crime is his role in obtaining and publishing secret military and diplomatic documents in 2010. Several human rights lawyers have made it clear that this raises profound First Amendment issues.

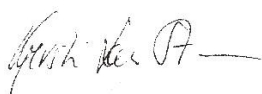
Mr. Assange has helped to bring out vital information on topics of great public significance. Information that an international public had a clear and justified interest in getting to know about, and which formed the basis for much important and critical journalism aimed at, among other things, the warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan. If, as an Australian citizen, he is to be extradited to a third country (U.S.) and potentially risk many years in prison for this, it would be a violation of the general principles of a democratic community and thus also highly regrettable. Right now, this constitute the core of Assange's case, and is the reason for our commitment.

We have no doubt that any conviction of Assange, on this basis, will be a powerful warning to potential sources and whistle blowers in the American society and that this will compromise the media's ability to shine a critical spotlight on the government and its actions.

We also fear that a judgment against Assange, in line with the charge that has now been taken, will in the future be used to target the media that makes use of information that is made available because someone has violated a duty of confidentiality or confidentiality promise. Much of the best journalism the world has seen is based on such breaches of confidentiality.

We therefore ask the British Government to make sure that Julian Assange is not extradited to the United States on the current legal basis.

Sincerely,



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President
Norwegian PEN



Arne Jensen
Secretary General
Association of
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Elin Floberghagen
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