



Free Julian Assange

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Who is Julian Assange and what is WikiLeaks?

Julian Assange is an Australian journalist and publisher who co-founded WikiLeaks in 2006. WikiLeaks is a website that was designed to publish documents leaked to it anonymously by officials from governments and corporations. The project was inspired by Daniel Ellsberg's 1971 release of the Pentagon Papers, a US government internal document that showed the extent of its deceit in prosecuting the war in Vietnam. Between 2006 and 2009, WikiLeaks published a series of important documents that contained revelations such as the membership list of the fascist British National Party (2008), the Petrogate oil scandal in Peru (2009), and a report on the US-Israeli cyber-attack on Iranian nuclear energy facilities (2009). In 2013, the International Federation of Journalists [called](#) WikiLeaks a 'new breed of media organisation based on the public's right to know'.

In 2010, while based in Iraq, US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning downloaded hundreds of thousands of documents, including videos, from US government servers. She sent them to WikiLeaks with a note, saying, 'This is possibly one of the more significant

documents of our time removing the fog of war and revealing the true nature of 21st century asymmetric warfare'. In November 2010, WikiLeaks partnered with major newspapers (*Der Spiegel*, *El Pais*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *The New York Times*) to publish the diplomatic cables ([CableGate](#)) that came from Manning's tranche of documents. WikiLeaks also published the [Iraq War Logs](#) and the [Afghan War Diaries](#), which contained materials that suggested that US forces had committed war crimes in both countries. Amongst these documents was a classified video from 2007 showing US forces killing civilians, including employees of the news organisation Reuters. This [video](#), released by WikiLeaks as *Collateral Murder*, had an enormous [impact](#) on public opinion about the nature of US warfare.

In November 2010, US Attorney General Eric Holder [said](#) that his office had opened 'an active, ongoing criminal investigation' against WikiLeaks.

Why is Julian Assange in Belmarsh Prison (London, UK)?

By early December 2010, senior US politicians had [called](#) upon the US government to prosecute Assange under the Espionage Act (1917). Sexual assault allegations in Sweden drew Assange into a legal net. While willing to return to Sweden to face the allegations, he wanted an undertaking that Sweden would not extradite him to the US, where he faced life imprisonment on potential espionage charges. Sweden, in close contact with the US, refused to provide this undertaking. In 2012, Assange received asylum at Ecuador's embassy in London. In April 2019, Ecuador's government – in exchange for what it considered a favourable deal with

the International Monetary Fund – handed Assange over to British authorities. Assange was taken to Belmarsh prison to await hearings for **extradition** not to Sweden, which had dropped its investigation, but to the United States.

The US government **indicted** Assange on 18 charges related to the obtaining and publishing of classified documents, which could result in a sentence of up to 175 years in prison. However, 17 of these charges were only levied after Assange had entered British custody. Initially, Assange was only **charged** with conspiring with Manning to crack a password and hack into the Pentagon's computer system, which on its own carries a short prison term of up to 5 years. The problem here, it appears, is that the US government has no evidence that Assange colluded with Manning to break into US servers; Manning says that she acted alone in acquiring and delivering the documents to WikiLeaks.

Thus, the US government seeks to bring Assange to the US to be tried under the Espionage Act for soliciting, obtaining, and then publishing classified information – in other words, precisely the work of an investigative journalist. It is journalism, therefore, that Assange is being prosecuted for.

What can you do to free Julian Assange from prison?

Mobilise. Take to the streets on 25 February 2022. Protest outside the embassies and consulates of the United Kingdom and the United States. Demand that these governments respect international law and Julian Assange's fundamental rights.

Send a letter. Sign this [letter](#) drafted by the International Peoples' Assembly and send it to your local [British embassy or consulate](#) telling them to respect their legal responsibilities.

Participate. Follow the International Peoples' Assembly on [social media](#) to learn more about Assange's case and his contributions to the anti-imperialist struggle today. Share our materials with your communities and movements. Help us get the word out about why we must #FreeAssangeNOW! [Register](#) online to participate in the [Belmarsh Tribunal](#) to free Julian Assange.



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