

Wikileaks - The Trial of Julian Assange

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Karl Posner examines the motivations behind the ongoing attempted extradition of Julian Assange to the U.S. and clarifies what's at stake for everyone, and particularly for those who want to see a socialist world.

Thursday 28 October saw the second and final day of the U.S. appeal hearing for the extradition of Julian Assange. Earlier this year district judge Vanessa Baraitser ruled that Assange cannot be extradited to the U.S. due to his autism, depression and the conditions he will face in a U.S. prison; she judged that there was a high chance of suicide. More worryingly, she did not dispute the charges for which Assange faces extradition. Organisations from Amnesty International and the American Civil Liberties Union in the U.S. to the National Union of Journalists in the UK have called for Assange's release, citing the grave threat his imprisonment poses for press freedom.

All of the charges Assange faces concern his publishing of videos and documents relating to the Afghanistan and Iraq war. The Wikileaks publications exposed the killing of unarmed civilians and a culture of cruelty and exploitation at the hands of the West. If Assange goes to the U.S. and is found guilty, it will set a precedent for the U.S. to take journalists who are not its citizens from anywhere in the world and to charge them with the serious crime of espionage for common journalistic activities. Such activities include storing classified data on a personal cloud drive, asking a source to provide more information, and helping them to avoid detection.

Many of Wikileaks' publications, the organisation Assange founded, have related to the power of tech monopolies. Wikileaks says that its aim is to give people a better picture of how such organisations operate. Philosopher Slavoj Žižek characterized them as the people's secret service; they have certainly been one of the only sources of information that allow us to question the secretive and unearned powers of many states and capitalist entities. As a result Assange has made powerful enemies. His trial has gone on for more than ten years and Assange spent the last two of those with violent criminals or in solitary confinement in Belmarsh prison (although he has not been charged with a crime).

The popular press has largely ignored the trial and contributed a steady stream of propaganda against Assange and Wikileaks. Many journalists sneered that Assange is a self-aggrandizing paranoid who could have walked out at any time during his seven years at the Ecuadorian embassy. A recent exclusive by *Yahoo! News* revealed that the CIA planned to kill or kidnap Assange while he was at the embassy, as a separate trial in Spain looked into the private company that sold surveillance to the U.S. on Assange's every conversation and visit to the bathroom there. No journalists have come forward to correct the record here. In fact, *The Guardian* has not even retracted a front page story claiming Assange met with Trump's campaign chair Paul Manafort.

As Assange details in his book *When Google Met WikiLeaks*, the way in which unaccountable tech monopolies are working with Western states should trouble us all. Although there is no evidence to date (and who but a Wikileaks could find such evidence), British journalist Ash Sarkar last week commented that given that YouTube demonetized a Novara Media video about Wikileaks some

months ago, she would not be surprised if the recent sudden deletion of the Novara Media YouTube channel on spurious grounds related to their publishing another video about Assange's trial.

The establishment has been clear that whistleblowing is only acceptable within strict limits. To anyone who opposes our increasingly managed democracy, the surveillance and manipulation by states of its citizenry, and the secret violence of Western Imperialism, this trial should be regarded as highly important. The very international agencies that have impeded genuine socialism across the globe have made this trial a fringe issue. More socialists must speak out or we risk conceding much of capacity to resist in the future.

Karl Posner

P.S.

- Anti*capitalistresistance. 28 Oct 2021:
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/the-trial-of-julian-assange/>