



Chargé d’Affaires ad interim Richard Riley
U.S. Embassy Oslo
PO Box 4075 AMB
0244 Oslo

Oslo, 7 September 2020

Dear Mr. Richard Riley,

PEN Norway urges the U.S. Government to stop the U.S. extradition request of Julian Assange

PEN Norway wishes to express its deep concern about the fact that Julian Assange, the WikiLeaks founder, has been indicted by the U.S. Justice Department on 17 counts for violating the Espionage Act. Several human rights lawyers have made it clear that the case raises profound First Amendment issues. We ask the U.S. Government to drop all charges against Julian Assange.

Mr. Assange’s alleged crime is his role in obtaining and publishing classified military and diplomatic documents in 2010. The documents provided by whistleblower Chelsea Manning revealed grave human rights violations and war crimes by U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. No one has been convicted for these crimes. With the U.S. indictment against Mr. Assange, he has become the target for a case that could open the door to criminalizing activities that are core to all investigative journalists who write about national security matters - the right to publish such. Several human rights lawyers have made it clear that this raises profound First Amendment issues.

If extradited, Mr. Assange would, by the U.S. government’s own admission, likely be placed under Special Administrative Measures. These measures prohibit prisoners from contact or communications with all but a few approved individuals, and any approved individuals would not be permitted to report the conditions of the treatment of the prisoner. UN Rapporteur on torture Nils Melzer has expressed with certainty that, if extradited to the U.S., Mr. Assange will be exposed to torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment. Similar concerns have also been raised by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and Amnesty International.

We stand together with Amnesty International, Reporters Without Borders and multiple human rights organisations in the demand that adequate measures must be taken to ensure Julian Assange a fair trial in the UK. We are aware of the letter addressed to UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, stating that extradition would be unlawful owing to failure to ensure the protection of Mr. Assange’s fundamental trial rights in the U.S., and signed by 169 lawyers and international legal groups.

PEN Norway urges the U.S. to drop all charges against Julian Assange. Mr. Assange has revealed secrets that should be open and accessible to the public, not punished by a lifelong prison sentence.

Yours sincerely,
PEN Norway

President