

Julian Assange

Julian Paul Assange (/əˈsɑːnz/^[4] born 3 July 1971) is an Australian editor, publisher, and activist who founded WikiLeaks in 2006. WikiLeaks came to international attention in 2010 when it published a series of leaks provided by U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning. These leaks included the Baghdad airstrike Collateral Murder video (April 2010),^{[5][6]} the Afghanistan war logs (July 2010), the Iraq war logs (October 2010), and Cablegate (November 2010). After the 2010 leaks, the United States government launched a criminal investigation into WikiLeaks.^[7]

In November 2010, Sweden issued an international arrest warrant for Assange over allegations of sexual assault.^[8] Assange said the allegations were a pretext for him to be extradited from Sweden to the United States because of his role in publishing secret American documents.^{[9][10]} After failing in his battle against extradition to Sweden, he breached bail and took refuge in the Embassy of Ecuador in London in June 2012.^[11] He was granted asylum by Ecuador on the grounds of political persecution, with the presumption that if he was extradited to Sweden, he would be eventually extradited to the US.^[12] Swedish prosecutors dropped their investigation in 2019, saying their evidence had "weakened considerably due to the long period of time that has elapsed since the events in question."^[13]

During the 2016 U.S. election campaign, WikiLeaks published confidential Democratic Party emails, showing that the party's national committee favoured Hillary Clinton over her rival Bernie Sanders in the primaries. In 2018, Special Counsel Robert Mueller charged twelve Russian intelligence officers with computer hacking and working with WikiLeaks and other organisations to disseminate the material. Assange said that the Russian government was not the source of the documents.^{[14][15][16]}

On 11 April 2019, Assange's asylum was withdrawn following a series of disputes with the Ecuadorian authorities. The police were invited into the embassy, and he was arrested.^[17] He was found guilty of breaching the Bail Act and sentenced to 50 weeks in prison.^[18] The United States government unsealed an indictment against Assange, related to the leaks provided by Chelsea Manning. On 23 May 2019, the United States government further charged Assange with violating the Espionage Act of 1917. Editors from newspapers including *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*, as well as press freedom organisations, criticised the government's decision to charge Assange under the Espionage Act, characterising it as an attack on the First Amendment to the United States Constitution,

Julian Assange



Assange in 2014

Born	3 July 1971 <div>Townsville, Queensland, Australia</div>
Nationality	Australian
Occupation	Editor · activist
Years active	1986–present
Known for	Founding WikiLeaks
Title	Director ^[1] and editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks (until September 2018); publisher (since September 2018) ^[2]
Criminal status	Imprisoned at HMP Belmarsh, England
Conviction(s)	Sentenced to good behaviour bond and reparations in 1996 for hacking offences. Sentenced to 50 weeks in prison, on

which guarantees freedom of the press.^{[19][20]} On 4 January 2021, District Judge Vanessa Baraitser ruled against the United States' request to extradite him and stated that doing so would be "oppressive" by reason of his mental health.^[21] On 6 January 2021, Assange was denied bail, pending an appeal by the United States.^[22] Assange is incarcerated in HM Prison Belmarsh.^[23]

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	1 May 2019, for breaching bail. ^[3]
Political party	<u>WikiLeaks</u> (2012–2015)
Spouse(s)	Teresa (divorced)
Partner(s)	Stella Moris-Smith Robertson (2015–present; engaged)
Awards	<u>Full list</u>
Signature	
	

Early life

Assange was born Julian Paul Hawkins on 3 July 1971 in Townsville, Queensland,^{[24][25][26]} to Christine Ann Hawkins (b. 1951),^[27] a visual artist,^{[28]:34} and John Shipton, an anti-war activist and builder.^[29] The couple separated before their son was born.^[29]

When Julian was a year old, his mother married Brett Assange^{[30][31][32]} (also known as Richard Assange),^[33] an actor, with whom she ran a small theatre company and whom Julian regards as his father (choosing Assange as his surname).^[34] Christine had a house in Nelly Bay on Magnetic Island, where they lived from time to time until it was destroyed by fire.^[25]

Christine and Brett Assange divorced around 1979. Christine then became involved with Leif Meynell, also known as Leif Hamilton, a member of Australian cult The Family, and they had a son before breaking up in 1982.^{[24][35][28]:37–38} Julian had a nomadic childhood, living in over 30 Australian towns and cities by the time he reached his mid-teens,^{[36][37]} when he settled with his mother and half-brother in Melbourne.^{[30][38]} Assange attended many schools, including Goolmangar Primary School in New South Wales (1979–1983)^[34] and Townsville State High School in Queensland^[39] as well as being schooled at home.^[31]

In 1987, aged 16, Assange began hacking under the name *Mendax*,^{[31][40]} taken from Horace's *splendide mendax* — nobly untruthful.^[41] He and two others, known as "Trax" and "Prime Suspect", formed a hacking group they called "the International Subversives".^[31] Assange may have been involved in the WANK (Worms Against Nuclear Killers) hack at NASA in 1989, but this has never been proven.^{[42][28]:42}

While in his teens, Assange married a girl named Teresa, and in 1989 they had a son, Daniel.^{[30][43][44]} The couple separated and disputed custody of Daniel until 1999.^[31] During the time of the custody dispute, Assange's brown hair turned white.^[24]

In September 1991, Assange was discovered hacking into the Melbourne master terminal of Nortel, a Canadian multinational telecommunications corporation.^[31] The Australian Federal Police tapped Assange's phone line (he was using a modem), raided his home at the end of October^[45] and eventually charged him in 1994 with 31 counts of hacking and related crimes.^[31] In December 1996, he pleaded guilty to 24 charges (the others were dropped) and was ordered to pay reparations of A\$2,100 and released on a good behaviour bond.^{[42][46]} He received a lenient penalty due to the absence of malicious or mercenary intent and his disrupted childhood.^{[46][47][48][49]}

Assange studied programming, mathematics and physics at Central Queensland University (1994)^[50] and the University of Melbourne (2003–2006),^{[30][51]} but did not complete a degree.^[43]

In 1993, Assange gave technical advice to the Victoria Police Child Exploitation Unit that assisted in prosecutions.^{[52][53]} In the same year, he was involved in starting one of the first public Internet service providers in Australia, Suburbia Public Access Network.^{[30][54]} He began programming in 1994, authoring or co-authoring the TCP port scanner Strobe (1995),^{[55][56]} patches to the open-source database PostgreSQL (1996),^{[57][58]} the Usenet caching software NNTPCache (1996),^[59] the Rubberhose deniable encryption system (1997)^{[60][61]} (which reflected his growing interest in cryptography),^[62] and Surfraw, a command-line interface for web-based search engines (2000).^[63] During this period, he also moderated the AUCRYPTO forum,^[62] ran



Assange, c. 2006

Best of Security, a website "giving advice on computer security" that had 5,000 subscribers in 1996,^{[28]:45} and contributed research to Suelette Dreyfus's *Underground* (1997), a book about Australian hackers, including the International Subversives.^{[40][64]} In 1998, he co-founded the company Earthmen Technology.^[49]

Assange stated that he registered the domain leaks.org in 1999, but "didn't do anything with it".^[49] He did publicise a patent granted to the National Security Agency in August 1999, for voice-data harvesting technology: "This patent should worry people. Everyone's overseas phone calls are or may soon be tapped, transcribed and archived in the bowels of an unaccountable foreign spy agency."^[62]

Founding WikiLeaks

Early publications

Assange and others established WikiLeaks in 2006. Assange became a member of the organisation's advisory board^[65] and described himself as the editor-in-chief.^[66] From 2007 to 2010, Assange travelled continuously on WikiLeaks business, visiting Africa, Asia, Europe and North America.^{[31][37][67][68][69]}

WikiLeaks published internet censorship lists, leaks,^[70] and classified media from anonymous sources, including revelations about drone strikes in Yemen, corruption across the Arab world,^[71] extrajudicial executions by Kenyan police,^[72] 2008 Tibetan unrest in China,^[73] and the "Petrogate" oil scandal in Peru.^[74]

WikiLeaks first came to international prominence in 2008,^[75] when "most of the US fourth estate" filed an amicus curiae brief—through the organizational efforts of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (RCFP)—to defend Wikileaks against a DMCA request from the Swiss bank Julius Baer, which had initially been granted.^[76]

In September 2008, during the 2008 United States presidential election campaigns, the contents of a Yahoo! account belonging to Sarah Palin (the running mate of Republican presidential nominee John McCain) were posted on WikiLeaks after being hacked into by members of Anonymous.^[77] After briefly appearing on a blog, the membership list of the far-right British National Party was posted to WikiLeaks on 18 November 2008.^[78]

In 2009, WikiLeaks released a report disclosing a "serious nuclear accident" at the Iranian Natanz nuclear facility.^[79] According to media reports, the accident may have been the direct result of a cyber-attack at Iran's nuclear program, carried out with the Stuxnet computer worm, a cyber-weapon built jointly by the United States and Israel.^[80]

Cypherpunks was published in November 2012.^[81] In 2012, Assange hosted a television show called the *World Tomorrow* on RT, a network funded by the Russian government.^[82]

Iraq and Afghan War logs and US diplomatic cables



Assange at the "New Media Days 09" in Copenhagen November 2009



Assange and Daniel Domscheit-Berg at the 26C3 in Berlin, December 2009

The material WikiLeaks published between 2006 and 2009 attracted various degrees of international attention,^[83] but after it began publishing documents supplied by U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning, WikiLeaks became a household name.

In April 2010, Wikileaks released the *Collateral Murder* video,^[5] which showed United States soldiers fatally shooting 18 people from a helicopter in Iraq, including Reuters journalists Namir Noor-Eldeen and his assistant Saeed Chmagh.^[6] Reuters had previously made a request to the US government for the *Collateral Murder* video under Freedom of Information but had been denied. Assange and others worked for a week to break the U.S. military's encryption of the video.^{[84][85]}

In October 2010, Wikileaks published the Iraq War logs, a collection of 391,832 United States Army field reports from the Iraq War covering the period from 2004 to 2009.^[86] Assange said that he hoped the publication would "correct some of that attack on the truth that occurred before the war, during the war, and which has continued after the war".^[87] Regarding his own role within Wikileaks he said "We always expect tremendous criticism. It is my role to be the lightning rod ... to attract the attacks against the organization for our work, and that is a difficult role. On the other hand. I get undue credit".^[88]

Other Manning material published by Wikileaks included the Afghanistan War logs in July 2010,^[89] and the Guantánamo Bay files in April 2011.^[90]

Wikileaks published a quarter of a million U.S. diplomatic cables,^[91] known as the "Cablegate" files, in November 2010. Wikileaks initially worked with established Western media organisations, and later with smaller regional media organisations, while also publishing the cables upon which their reporting was based.^{[92][93]} The files showed United States espionage against United Nations and other world leaders,^{[94][95][96]} revealed tensions between the U.S. and its allies, and exposed corruption in countries throughout the world as documented by U.S. diplomats, helping to spark the Arab Spring.^{[97][98]} The Cablegate and Iraq and Afghan War releases impacted diplomacy and public opinion globally, with responses varying by region.^[93]

Assessments

Opinions of Assange at this time were divided. Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard described his activities as "illegal",^[99] but the police said he had not broken Australian law.^[100] Then United States Vice-President Joe Biden and others called him a "terrorist".^{[101][102][103][104][105]} Some called for his assassination or execution.^{[106][107][108][109][110]} Support for Assange came from Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva,^[111] Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa,^[112] Russian President Dmitry Medvedev,^{[113][114]} British Member of Parliament (and later Labour Party leader) Jeremy Corbyn,^[115] Spanish Podemos party leader Pablo Iglesias,^[116] UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay,^[117] and Argentina's ambassador to the UK, Alicia Castro.^[118] He also garnered support from many leading activists and celebrities, including Tariq Ali,^[119] John Perry Barlow,^[120] Daniel Ellsberg,^{[121][122]} Mary Kostakidis,^[123] John Pilger,^{[124][125]} Ai Weiwei,^[126] Michael Moore,^[127] Noam Chomsky,^[126] Vaughan Smith,^{[128][129]} and Oliver Stone.^[130]

In 2010 Assange received the Sam Adams Award,^[131] and a string of distinctions: the *Le Monde* readers' choice award for person of the year,^{[132][133]} the *Time* readers' choice award for person of the year,^{[134][135]} a deal for his autobiography worth at least US\$1.3 million,^{[136][137][138]} and selection by the Italian edition of *Rolling Stone* as "Rockstar of the year".^[139]

In 2011, Assange won the Sydney Peace Foundation Gold Medal for Peace with Justice.^[140] Two weeks later, he filed for the trademark "Julian Assange" in Europe, which was to be used for "Public speaking services; news reporter services; journalism; publication of texts other than publicity texts; education services; entertainment services".^{[141][142][143]} Assange was made an honorary member of

the Australian trade union, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, in 2010.^{[144][145][146]} He was awarded the Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism in June 2011,^{[147][148]} having earlier won the Amnesty International UK Media Award (New Media) in 2009.^[149]

In 2011, the Walkley Foundation awarded WikiLeaks the Walkley Award for "Most outstanding contribution to journalism".^[150] It commended WikiLeaks and Assange for their "brave, determined and independent stand for freedom of speech and transparency that has empowered people all over the world".

Criminal investigations

US criminal investigation

After WikiLeaks released the Manning material, United States authorities began investigating WikiLeaks and Assange personally to prosecute them under the Espionage Act of 1917.^[151] In November 2010, US Attorney-General Eric Holder said there was "an active, ongoing criminal investigation" into WikiLeaks.^[152] It emerged from legal documents leaked over the ensuing months that Assange and others were being investigated by a federal grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia.^[153]

In December 2011, prosecutors in the Chelsea Manning case revealed the existence of chat logs between Manning and an interlocutor they claimed to be Assange.^{[154][155]} Assange said that Wikileaks has no way of knowing the identity of its sources and that chats, including user-names, with sources were anonymous.^{[156][157][158]} In January 2011, Assange described the allegation that Wikileaks had conspired with Manning as "absolute nonsense".^[159] The logs were presented as evidence during Manning's court-martial in June–July 2013.^[160] The prosecution argued that they showed WikiLeaks helping Manning reverse-engineer a password, but Manning said she acted alone.^[161]

In 2013, US officials said that it was unlikely that the Justice Department would indict Assange for publishing classified documents because it would also have to prosecute the news organisations and writers who published classified material.^[162]

Assange was being examined separately by "several government agencies" in addition to the grand jury, most notably the FBI.^[163] Court documents published in May 2014 suggest that Assange was under "active and ongoing" investigation at that time.^[164]

Some Snowden documents published in 2014 showed that the United States government put Assange on the "2010 Manhunting Timeline",^[165] and in the same period they urged their allies to open criminal investigations into the editor-in-chief of WikiLeaks.^[166] In the same documents, there was a proposal by the National Security Agency (NSA) to designate WikiLeaks a "malicious foreign actor", thus increasing the surveillance against it.^[165]



Gun camera footage of the airstrike of 12 July 2007 in Baghdad, showing the deaths of journalists Namir Noor-Eldeen and Saeed Chmagh by a US helicopter



Assange speaks on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral in London, 16 October 2011

In January 2015, WikiLeaks issued a statement saying that three members of the organisation had received notice from Google that Google had complied with a federal warrant by a US District Court to turn over their emails and metadata on 5 April 2012.^[167] In July 2015, Assange called himself a "wanted journalist" in an open letter to the French president published in *Le Monde*.^[168] In a December 2015 court submission, the US government confirmed its "sensitive, ongoing law enforcement proceeding into the Wikileaks matter".^[169]

Under the Obama Administration, the Department of Justice did not indict Assange because it was unable to find any evidence that his actions differed from those of a journalist.^[170] However, after Trump took power, CIA director Mike Pompeo and Attorney General Jeff Sessions stepped up pursuit of Assange.^[171]

In April 2017, US officials were preparing to file formal charges against Assange.^[172] In early 2019, individuals began to come forward with news of being questioned about Assange by prosecutors in Alexandria, Virginia. Legal scholar Stephen Vladeck stated that the prosecutors, after refusing to unseal the indictment, accelerated the case in 2019 due to the impending statute of limitations on Assange's largest leaks.^[173] Witnesses named in the investigation included Jacob Appelbaum, Daniel Domscheit-Berg, David House, Jason Katz and Chelsea Manning, all of whom condemned it as a form of government over-reach.^[174]

Swedish sexual assault allegations

Assange visited Sweden in August 2010. During his visit, he became the subject of sexual assault allegations from two women.^[175] He was questioned, the case was initially closed, and he was told he could leave the country. In November 2010, however, the case was reopened by a special prosecutor who said that she wanted to question Assange over two counts of sexual molestation, one count of unlawful coercion and one count of "lesser-degree rape" (Swedish: *mindre grov våldtäkt*). Assange denied the allegations and said he was happy to face questions in Britain.^{[176][177]}



Demonstration in support of Assange in front of Sydney Town Hall, 10 December 2010

On 20 November 2010, the Swedish police issued an international arrest warrant. On 8 December 2010, Assange gave himself up to British police and attended his first extradition hearing where he was remanded in custody. On 16 December 2010, at the second hearing, he was granted bail by the High Court and released after his supporters paid £240,000 in cash and sureties. A further hearing on 24 February 2011 ruled that Assange should be extradited to Sweden. This decision was upheld by the High Court on 2 November and by the Supreme Court on 30 May the next year.^[178]

After previously stating that she could not question a suspect by video link or in the Swedish embassy, prosecutor Marianne Ny wrote to the English Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in 2013. Her letter advised that she intended to lift the detention order and withdraw the European arrest warrant as the actions were not proportionate to the costs and seriousness of the crime. In response, the CPS tried to dissuade Ny from doing so.^[179]

In March 2015, after public criticism from other Swedish law practitioners, Ny changed her mind about interrogating Assange, who had taken refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy in London.^[180] These interviews, which began on 14 November 2016, involved the British police, Swedish prosecutors and Ecuadorian officials, and were eventually published online.^[181] By that time, the statute of limitations had expired on all three of the less serious allegations. Since the Swedish prosecutor had not interviewed Assange by 18 August 2015, the questioning pertained only to the open investigation of "lesser degree rape".^{[182][183][184][185]}

On 19 May 2017, the Swedish authorities suspended their investigation, saying they could not expect the Ecuadorian Embassy to communicate reliably with Assange with respect to the case. Chief prosecutor Marianne Ny officially revoked his arrest warrant, but said the investigation could still be resumed if Assange visited Sweden before August 2020.^{[186][187][188]}

Following Assange's arrest on 11 April 2019, the case was reopened, in May 2019, under prosecutor Eva-Marie Persson.^[189] On 19 November, she announced that she had discontinued her investigation, saying that the evidence was not strong enough. She added that although she was confident in the complainant, "the evidence has weakened considerably due to the long period of time that has elapsed".^[13]

Ecuadorian Embassy

Entering the Ecuadorian embassy

On 19 June 2012, the Ecuadorian foreign minister, Ricardo Patiño, announced that Assange had applied for political asylum, that his government was considering the request, and that Assange was at the Ecuadorian embassy in London.^{[190][191][192][193]}

Assange and his supporters said he was not concerned about any proceedings in Sweden as such, but said that the Swedish allegations were designed to discredit him and were a pretext for his extradition from Sweden to the United States.^{[194][195][196]} Assange described the allegations "radical feminist conspiracy" and said the women who had complained were lesbians.^[197]



Assange on the balcony of Ecuadorian embassy in London in 2012

Assange breached bail conditions by staying in the embassy and faced arrest if he left. Assange's supporters, including journalist Jemima Goldsmith, journalist John Pilger, and film-maker Ken Loach, forfeited £293,500 in bail and sureties.^{[198][199]} Goldsmith said she was surprised at his asylum bid and expected him to face the Swedish allegations.^[200]

The UK government wrote to Patiño stating that the police were entitled to enter the embassy and arrest Assange under UK law.^[201] Patiño criticised what he said was an implied threat, stating that "such actions would be a blatant disregard of the Vienna Convention". Officers of the Metropolitan Police Service were stationed outside from June 2012 to October 2015 to arrest Assange for breaching the bail conditions and to compel him to attend court to face the Swedish extradition appeal hearing, should he leave the embassy. The police guard was withdrawn on grounds of cost in October 2015, but the police said they would still deploy "several overt and covert tactics to arrest him". The cost of the policing for the period was reported to have been £12.6 million.^[202]

Wikileaks insiders stated that Assange decided to seek asylum because he felt abandoned by the Australian government. The Australian attorney-general, Nicola Roxon, had written to Assange's lawyer, Jennifer Robinson, saying that Australia would not seek to involve itself in any international exchanges about Assange's future. She suggested that if Assange was imprisoned in the US, he could apply for an international prisoner transfer to Australia. Assange's lawyers described the letter as a "declaration of abandonment".^[196]

On 16 August 2012, Patiño announced that Ecuador was granting Assange political asylum because of the threat represented by the United States secret investigation against him.^{[203][204][205][206]} In its formal statement, Ecuador said that "as a consequence of Assange's determined defense to freedom of expression and freedom of press... in any given moment, a situation may come where his life, safety



Ecuadoran foreign minister Ricardo Patiño met with Assange at the Ecuadorian Embassy on 16 June 2013

or personal integrity will be in danger".^[207] Latin American states expressed support for Ecuador.^{[208][209][210][211]} Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa confirmed on 18 August that Assange could stay at the embassy indefinitely,^{[212][213][214]} and the following day Assange gave his first speech from the balcony.^{[215][216]} An office converted into a studio apartment, equipped with a bed, telephone, sun lamp, computer, shower, treadmill, and kitchenette, became his home from then until 11 April 2019.^{[217][218][219]}

Activities in the embassy

In July 2012, Wikileaks began publishing the Syria Files, a collection of more than two million emails from Syrian political figures, government ministries and companies. Assange said the "Syria Files" "helps us not merely to criticize one group or another, but to understand their interests, actions and thoughts. It is only through understanding this conflict that we can hope to resolve it".^[220]

Assange stood for the Australian Senate in the 2013 Australian federal election for the newly formed WikiLeaks Party but failed to win a seat.^[221] The party was wracked by internal dissent over its governance and electoral tactics and was deregistered due to low membership numbers in 2015.^{[222][223]}

In 2013, Assange and others in WikiLeaks helped whistleblower Edward Snowden flee from US law enforcement. After the United States cancelled Snowden's passport, stranding him in Russia, they considered transporting him to Latin America on the presidential jet of a sympathetic Latin American leader. In order to throw the US off the scent, they spoke about the jet of the Bolivian president Evo Morales, instead of the jet they were considering. As a result, Morales' jet was forced to land in Austria in July 2013. Assange said the grounding "reveals the true nature of the relationship between Western Europe and the United States" as "a phone call from U.S. intelligence was enough to close the airspace to a booked presidential flight, which has immunity". Assange advised Snowden that he would be safest in Russia which was better able to protect its borders than Venezuela, Brazil or Ecuador.^[224] In 2015, Maria Luisa Ramos, the Bolivian ambassador to Russia, accused Assange of putting Morales' life at risk.^{[225][224]} Assange stated that he regretted what happened but that "[w]e can't predict that other countries engage in some ... unprecedented criminal operation".^{[224][225]}

In 2013, Assange analysed the Kissinger cables held at the US National Archives and released them in searchable form.^[226]

Documents provided by Edward Snowden showed that in 2012 and 2013 the NZ government worked to establish a secret mass surveillance programme which it called "Operation Speargun". On 15 September 2014, Assange appeared via remote video link on Kim Dotcom's *Moment of Truth* town hall meeting held in Auckland which discussed the programme. Assange said the Snowden documents showed that he had been a target of the programme and that "Operation Speargun" represented "an extreme, bizarre, Orwellian future that is being constructed secretly in New Zealand".^[227]

By 2015, WikiLeaks had published more than ten million documents and associated analyses, and was described by Assange as "a giant library of the world's most persecuted documents".^[228]

In June 2015, Wikileaks began publishing confidential and secret Saudi Arabian government documents.^[229]

On 3 July 2015, Paris newspaper *Le Monde* published an open letter from Assange to French President François Hollande in which Assange urged the French government to grant him refugee status.^[168] Assange stated that one of his children lives in France with the child's mother. He also said his family had faced death threats and harassment because of his work, forcing them to change identities and reduce contact with him.^[168] In response to this letter, Hollande said: "France cannot act on his request. The situation of Mr Assange does not present an immediate danger."^[230] On 4 July 2015, Baltasar Garzón, head of Assange's legal team, said that Assange had sent the open letter to Hollande; but Assange had only expressed his willingness "to be hosted in France if and only if an initiative was taken by the competent authorities".^[231]

In 2015, Assange began a relationship with Stella Moris-Smith Robertson, his South African-born lawyer. They became engaged in 2017 and had two children. The relationship was revealed by Moris-Smith Robertson in 2020 because she feared for his life.^{[232][233][234]}

In 2015, *La Repubblica* stated that it had evidence of the UK's role via the English Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in creating the "legal and diplomatic quagmire" which prevented Assange from leaving the Ecuadorian embassy. *La Repubblica* sued the CPS in 2017 to obtain further information but its case was rejected with the judge saying "the need for the British authorities to protect the confidentiality of the extradition process outweighs the public interest of the press to know".^[235] A further appeal was rejected in September 2019.^{[235][236]}

On 5 February 2016, the UN's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that Assange had been subject to arbitrary detention by the UK and Swedish Governments since 7 December 2010, including his time in prison, on conditional bail and in the Ecuadorian embassy. The Working Group said Assange should be allowed to walk free and be given compensation.^{[237][238]} The UK and Swedish governments rejected the claim.^[239] The UK Foreign Secretary, Philip Hammond, said the claim was "ridiculous" and that the group was "made up of lay people", and called Assange a "fugitive from justice" who "can come out any time he chooses".^[240] UK and Swedish prosecutors called the group's claims irrelevant.^{[241][242]} The UK said it would arrest Assange should he leave the embassy.^[243] Mark Ellis, executive director of the International Bar Association, stated that the finding is "not binding on British law".^[244] US legal scholar Noah Feldman described the Working Group's conclusion as astonishing, summarising it as "Assange might be charged with a crime in the US. Ecuador thinks charging him with violating national security law would amount to 'political persecution' or worse. Therefore Sweden must give up on its claims to try him for rape, and Britain must ignore the Swedes' arrest warrant and let him leave the country."^[245]

In September 2016, Assange said he would agree to US prison in exchange for President Obama granting Chelsea Manning clemency.^{[246][247]} Obama commuted Manning's sentence on 17 January 2017.^[247] The next day, Obama said, "I don't pay a lot of attention to Mr. Assange's tweets, so that wasn't a consideration in this instance".^[248] The same day, Assange's US-based attorney Barry Pollack said that Assange had called for Manning to be released immediately. Accordingly, Pollack maintained, the commutation—which specified Manning would be freed four months thence—did not meet Assange's conditions.^[249] On 17 May 2017, Manning was released from prison.^[250] Two days



Demonstration outside the Ecuadorian embassy to free Assange, 16 June 2013



John Pilger, Richard Gizbert, and Julian Assange – 'The WikiLeaks Files' Book Launch – Foyles, London, 29 September 2015

later, Assange emerged on the embassy's balcony and told a crowd that, despite no longer facing a Swedish sex investigation, he would remain inside the embassy to avoid extradition to the United States.^[251]

On 25 November 2016, WikiLeaks released emails and internal documents that provided details on the US military operations in Yemen from 2009 to March 2015.^{[252][253]}

In December 2016, Wikileaks published emails from the Turkish government in response to Erdoğan's post-coup purges in Turkey. The emails covered the period from 2010 to July 2016. In response, Turkey blocked access to the Wikileaks site.^{[254][255][256]}

2016 U.S. presidential election

During the 2016 US Democratic Party presidential primaries, WikiLeaks hosted emails sent or received by presidential candidate Hillary Clinton while she was Secretary of State. The emails had been released by the US State Department under a Freedom of information request in February 2016.^[257] WikiLeaks also created a search engine for the emails.^[258] The emails were a major point of discussion during the presidential election.^[259]

In February 2016, Assange wrote: "I have had years of experience in dealing with Hillary Clinton and have read thousands of her cables. Hillary lacks judgment and will push the United States into endless, stupid wars which spread terrorism. ... she certainly should not become president of the United States."^[260] On 25 July, following the Republican National Convention, Assange said that choosing between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump is like choosing between cholera or gonorrhea. "Personally, I would prefer neither."^{[261][262][263]} In an Election Day statement, Assange criticised both Clinton and Trump, saying that "The Democratic and Republican candidates have both expressed hostility towards whistleblowers."^[264]

Email leaks

On 22 July 2016, WikiLeaks released emails and documents from the Democratic National Committee (DNC) seemingly presenting ways to undercut Clinton's competitor Bernie Sanders and showing apparent favouritism towards Clinton, leading to the resignation of party chairman Debbie Wasserman Schultz.^{[265][266]} *The New York Times* reported that Assange accused Clinton of pushing for his indictment and that he had timed the release to coincide with the 2016 Democratic National Convention.^[267] In an interview, Assange suggested that he saw Clinton as a personal foe.^{[261][268]}



Debbie Wasserman Schultz resigned as DNC chairwoman following WikiLeaks releases suggesting bias against Bernie Sanders.

On 4 October 2016, in a teleconference with Assange, reporters spoke of a promise to reveal further information which would bring Clinton's candidacy down, calling this "The October Surprise". Rightwing pundits as well as Trump campaign staffers like Roger Stone also hinted at further releases to be imminent.^[269] On 7 October, the *Washington Post* published a story on Access Hollywood tape, reporting the existence of a recording of an interview conducted by television host Billy Bush in 2005 in which Trump described his habit of sexually assaulting women.^[270] Shortly after the *Post* article was released, also on 7 October, Assange posted a press release on WikiLeaks exposing a second batch of emails with over 2,000 mails from Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta.^[271] Podesta, in an interview with CNN, stated "On October 7, the Access Hollywood tapes comes out. One hour later, WikiLeaks starts dropping my emails into the public. One could say that

those things might not have been a coincidence."^[272] Upon learning of the Access Hollywood tape, Roger Stone, an unofficial advisor to Trump, worked to get Wikileaks to release email messages to counter the impact of the tape. Eric Lutz wrote in Vanity Fair magazine:

Apparently sensing the cataclysmic damage the comments would wreak, Stone—self-styled dirty trickster and unofficial Trump adviser—spoke by phone to the conspiracy theorist Jerome Corsi, directing him to get in touch with Julian Assange, whose organization, WikiLeaks, had obtained Russian-hacked emails from Democratic Party staffers, including Clinton campaign chair John Podesta. 'Drop the Podesta emails immediately,' Stone instructed, seeking to 'balance the news cycle' after the release of the Access Hollywood tape. Thirty-two minutes later, WikiLeaks followed through.^[273]

In mid-October, the Ecuadorian government temporarily severed Assange's Internet connection because of the leaks.^[274] In December, Assange said the connection had been restored.^[275]

Assessment and investigation

Cybersecurity experts attributed the attack to the Russian government.^[15] The Central Intelligence Agency, together with several other agencies, concluded that Russian intelligence agencies hacked the DNC servers, as well as Podesta's email account, and provided the information to WikiLeaks to bolster Trump's election campaign.^[276] As a result of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 United States elections, 12 Russian GRU military intelligence agents were indicted on 13 July 2018 for the attack on the DNC mail-server. According to the Mueller report, this group shared these mails using the pseudonym Guccifer 2.0 with WikiLeaks and other entities.^[277] The investigation also unearthed communications between Guccifer 2.0, WikiLeaks and the Trump campaign, in which they coordinated the release of the material.^[271]

In interviews, Assange repeatedly said that the Russian government was not the source of the DNC and Podesta emails,^{[14][278][279]} and accused the Clinton campaign of "a kind of neo-McCarthy hysteria" about Russian involvement.^[16] On the eve of the election, Assange addressed the criticism he had received for publishing Clinton material, saying that WikiLeaks publishes "material given to us if it is of political, diplomatic, historical or ethical importance and which has not been published elsewhere," that it had never received any information on Trump, Jill Stein, or Gary Johnson's campaign.^{[280][281]} Political scientists Matthew Baum and Phil Gussin, wrote that WikiLeaks may have released more emails whenever Clinton's lead expanded in the polls.^[282]

A 2017 article in Foreign Policy said that WikiLeaks turned down leaks on the Russian government, focusing instead on hacks relating to the US presidential election.^[283] This was disputed by Wikileaks which said that as far as it could recall the material was already public.^[283] The Foreign Policy article said that Assange had been pro-Russian since 2012.^[283]

In April 2018, the DNC sued Assange, accusing WikiLeaks and Russian agents of a "brazen attack on American democracy".^[284] The Committee to Protect Journalists said that the lawsuit raised several important press freedom questions.^[285] The suit was dismissed with prejudice in July 2019. Judge John Koeltl said that Assange and Wikileaks "did not participate in any wrongdoing in obtaining the materials in the first place" and were therefore within the law in publishing the information.^[286]

Murder of Seth Rich

In a July 2016 interview, Assange implied that DNC staffer Seth Rich was the source of the DNC emails and that Rich had been killed as a result. WikiLeaks offered a \$20,000 reward for information about his murder.^[287] Assange's comments were highlighted by right-wing outlets such as Fox News,

The Washington Times and conspiracy website *InfoWars*^{[288][287]} and set off a spike in attention to the murder. This way Assange's claims lent credibility and visibility to what had at that point been a conspiracy theory in the fringe parts of the Internet.^[289] According to the Mueller investigation, Assange "implied falsely" that Rich was the source to obscure the fact that Russia was the source.^{[290][291][292]} Assange received the mails when Rich was already dead and continued to confer with the Russian hackers to coordinate the release of the material.^{[290][271]}

Later years in the embassy

In March 2017, Wikileaks began releasing the largest leak of CIA documents in history, codenamed Vault 7. The documents included details of the CIA's hacking capabilities and software tools used to break into smartphones, computers and other Internet-connected devices.^[293] In April, CIA director Mike Pompeo called WikiLeaks "a non-state hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors like Russia".^{[294][295]} Assange accused the CIA of trying to "subvert" his First Amendment rights. He said that "History shows the danger of allowing the CIA or any intelligence agency, whose very modus operandi includes misdirection and lying, to be the sole arbiter of what is true or what is prudent. Otherwise, every day might see a repeat of the many foolish CIA actions which have led to death, displacement, dictatorship and terrorism."^[296] On 6 June 2017, Assange tweeted his support for NSA leaker Reality Winner,^[297] offering a \$10,000 reward for information about a reporter for *The Intercept* who had allegedly helped the US government to identify Winner as the leaker.^[298]



Rafael Correa, who was openly sympathetic to Assange, served as President of Ecuador from 2007 to 2017

On 16 August 2017, US Republican congressman Dana Rohrabacher visited Assange and offered him a pardon if Assange provided information about who gave him the 2016 Democratic National Committee email leaks. At his extradition hearings in 2020, Assange's lawyers told the court that President Trump had made the offer. However, Trump and Rohrabacher said they had never talked about it.^{[299][300][301]}

In August 2017, in the midst of the Qatar diplomatic crisis, Dubai-based *Al Arabiya* accused Assange of acting to support Qatar.^[302] In September 2017, Assange released "Spy Files Russia," revealing "how a St. Petersburg-based technology company called Peter-Service helped Russian state entities gather detailed data on Russian cellphone users, part of a national system of online surveillance called System for Operative Investigative Activities (SORM)." According to Moscow-based journalist Fred Weir, "experts say it casts a timely spotlight on the vast surveillance operations mounted by Russian security services."^[303] It was suggested that the release was approved by the Russian government and was an attempt to distract from the Mueller investigation.^{[304][305]}

In February 2018, after Sweden had suspended its investigation, Assange brought two legal actions, arguing that Britain should drop its arrest warrant for him as it was "no longer right or proportionate to pursue him" and the arrest warrant for breaching bail had lost its "purpose and its function". In both cases, Senior District Judge Emma Arbuthnot, ruled that the arrest warrant should remain in place.^{[306][307]}

On 28 March 2018, Ecuador cut Assange's Internet connection in response to his social media posts denouncing the arrest of Catalonian separatist leader Carles Puigdemont which it put at risk Ecuador's relations with European nations.^[308] In May 2018, *Guardian* reported that over five years Ecuador had spent at least \$5 million (£3.7m) to protect Assange, employing a security company and undercover agents to monitor his visitors, embassy staff and the British police. Ecuador reportedly also devised plans to help Assange escape should British police forcibly enter the embassy to seize

him. *The Guardian* reported that, by 2014, Assange had compromised the embassy's communications system. Wikileaks described the allegation as "an anonymous libel aligned with the current UK-US government onslaught against Mr Assange".^[309]

In July 2018, President Moreno said that he wanted Assange out of the embassy so long as his life was not in danger.^[310] By October 2018, Assange's communications were partially restored.^[311]

On 16 October 2018, congressmen from the United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs wrote an open letter to President Moreno which described Assange as a dangerous criminal and stated that progress between the US and Ecuador in the areas of economic co-operation, counter-narcotics assistance and the return of a USAID mission to Ecuador depended on Assange being handed over to the authorities.^{[312][313]}

In October 2018, Assange sued the government of Ecuador for violating his "fundamental rights and freedoms" by threatening to remove his protection and cut off his access to the outside world, refusing him visits from journalists and human rights organisations and installing signal jammers to prevent phone calls and internet access.^{[314][315]} An Ecuadorian judge ruled against him, saying that requiring Assange to pay for his Internet use and clean up after his cat did not violate his right to asylum.^[316]

In November 2018, Pamela Anderson, a close friend and regular visitor of Assange, gave an interview in which she asked the Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, to defend Assange.^[317] Morrison rejected the request with a response Anderson considered "smutty". Anderson responded that "[r]ather than making lewd suggestions about me, perhaps you should instead think about what you are going to say to millions of Australians when one of their own is marched in an orange jumpsuit to Guantanamo Bay – for publishing the truth. You can prevent this."^[318]

On 21 December 2018, the UN's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention urged the UK to let Assange leave the embassy freely. In a statement, the organisation said that the "Swedish investigations have been closed for over 18 months now, and the only ground remaining for Mr Assange's continued deprivation of liberty is a bail violation in the UK, which is, objectively, a minor offense that cannot post-facto justify the more than six years' confinement that he has been subjected to".^[319]

In February 2019, the parliament of Geneva passed a motion demanding that the Swiss government extend asylum to Assange.^[320] In January 2020, the Catalan Dignity Commission awarded Assange its 2019 Dignity Prize for supporting the Catalan people during the 2017 Catalan independence referendum.^[321]

Assange submitted a complaint to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and accused the Ecuadorian embassy of monitoring his daily activities and restricting his visitors. The complaint requested the Ecuadorian government to "ease the conditions that it had imposed on his residence" at the embassy. Furthermore, the complaint urged the commission to forbid the embassy from extraditing him to the US. In March 2019, the commission rejected his complaint.^[322]

Surveillance of Assange in the embassy

On 10 April 2019, WikiLeaks said it had uncovered an extensive surveillance operation against Assange from within the embassy. WikiLeaks said that "material including video, audio, copies of private legal documents and a medical report" had surfaced in Spain and that unnamed individuals in Madrid had made an extortion attempt.^{[323][324]}

On 26 September 2019, the Spanish newspaper *El País* reported that the Spanish defence and security company Undercover Global S.L. (UC Global) had spied on Assange for the CIA during his time in the embassy. UC Global had been contracted to protect the embassy during this time.

According to the report UC Global's owner David Morales had provided the CIA with audio and video of meetings Assange held with his lawyers and colleagues. Morales also arranged for the US to have direct access to the stream from video cameras installed in the embassy at the beginning of December 2017. The evidence was part of a secret investigation by Spain's High Court, the Audiencia Nacional, into Morales and his relationship with US intelligence. The investigation was precipitated by a complaint by Assange that accused UC Global of violating his privacy and client-attorney privileges as well as committing misappropriation, bribery and money laundering.^[325]

Morales was arrested in September on charges involving violations of privacy and client-attorney privileges, as well as misappropriation, bribery, money laundering and criminal possession of weapons. He was released on bail. On 25 September, Spanish Judge José de la Mata sent British authorities a European Investigation Order (EIO) asking for permission to question Assange by videoconference as a witness in the case against Morales. The United Kingdom Central Authority (UKCA), which is in charge of processing and responding to EIOs in the UK, provisionally denied De la Mata's request to question Assange, raised a number of objections to the request, and asked for more details. De la Mata responded to UKCA's objections on 14 October by stating that Assange was the victim who had filed the complaint and that unlawful disclosure of secrets and bribery are also crimes in the UK. He said that the crimes were partially committed on Spanish territory because the microphones used to spy on Assange were bought in Spain, and the information obtained was sent and uploaded to servers at UC Global S. L.'s headquarters in Spain.^[326]

Spanish judicial bodies were upset at having their EIO request denied by UKCA and believed the British justice system is concerned by the effect the Spanish case may have on the process to extradite Assange to the US.^[326]

In a November 2019 article, Stefania Maurizi said she had access to some of the videos, audios and photos showing a medical examination of Assange, a meeting between Ecuadorian ambassador Carlos Abad Ortiz and his staff, a meeting between Assange, Glenn Greenwald and David Miranda and lunch between Assange and British rapper M.I.A. Microphones had been placed in the women's toilets to capture meetings between Assange and his lawyers. Phones belonging to some of the embassy's visitors were compromised. Spanish lawyer Aitor Martinez, who is part of Assange's legal team, said videos were taken of meetings between Assange and his legal defence team. Maurizi concluded that, based on statements from former employees of UC Global, internal UC Global emails and the type of information collected, it was clear that the surveillance was conducted on behalf of the US government and the information gathered would be used by the US to assist in its case for extraditing Assange.^[327]

Britain agreed to allow Judge De la Mata to interview Assange via video link on 20 December.^[328] According to his lawyer, Assange testified that he was unaware that cameras installed by Undercover Global were also capturing audio and suggested the surveillance likely targeted his legal team.^[329]

Imprisonment and extradition proceedings

Arrest in the embassy

On 2 April 2019, Ecuador's president Moreno said that Assange had violated the terms of his asylum, after photos surfaced on the internet linking Moreno to a corruption scandal.^{[330][331]} WikiLeaks said it had acquired none of the published material, and that it merely reported on a corruption investigation against Moreno by Ecuador's legislature.^[331] WikiLeaks reported a source within the Ecuadorian government saying that, due to the controversy, an agreement had been reached to expel Assange from the embassy and place him in the custody of UK police.^{[332][333]} According to critics of

Moreno, such as former Ecuadorian foreign minister Guillaume Long, the revoking of Assange's asylum was connected to an upcoming decision by the International Monetary Fund to grant Ecuador a \$4.2 billion loan.^{[334][335][336][337]}

On 11 April 2019, the Metropolitan Police were invited into the embassy and arrested Assange in connection with his failure to surrender to the court in June 2012 for extradition to Sweden.^[338] Moreno stated that Ecuador withdrew Assange's asylum after he repeatedly violated international conventions regarding domestic interference.^{[339][340]} Moreno referred to Assange as a "spoiled brat" and "miserable hacker".^[341] British foreign secretary Jeremy Hunt thanked Moreno for co-operation, and the British prime minister, Theresa May, said that "no one is above the law".^[342] The Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, said that Assange is "not going to be given special treatment ... It has got nothing to do with [Australia], it is a matter for the US".^[343]



Ecuadorian President Lenín Moreno with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, 20 July 2019

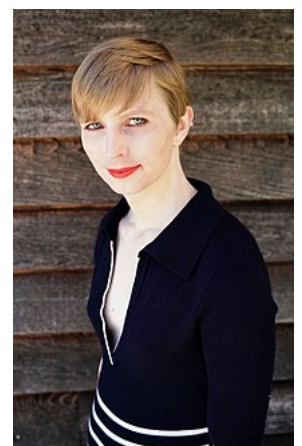
On the day of his arrest, Assange was charged with breaching the *Bail Act 1976* and was found guilty after a short hearing.^[344] Judge Michael Snow said Assange was "a narcissist who cannot get beyond his own selfish interest" and he had "not come close to establishing reasonable excuse".^[345] During the hearing Assange requested that Arbuthnot, who had presided over legal proceedings in February 2018 related to the British arrest warrant, recuse herself from all extradition hearings because her husband, James Arbuthnot, had been impacted by some of Wikileaks' releases.^[346]

Assange was remanded to HM Prison Belmarsh, and on 1 May 2019 he was sentenced to 50 weeks imprisonment.^[18] The judge said he would be released after serving half of his sentence, subject to other proceedings and conditional upon committing no further offences.^[347] The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention said that the verdict contravened "principles of necessity and proportionality" for what it considered a "minor violation".^{[348][349]} Assange appealed his sentence, but dropped his appeal in July.^[350]

Indictment in the United States

In 2012 and 2013, US officials indicated that Assange was not named in a sealed indictment.^{[351][352]} On 6 March 2018, a federal grand jury for the Eastern District of Virginia issued a sealed indictment against Assange.^[353] In November 2018, US prosecutors accidentally revealed the indictment.^{[354][355][356][357][358]}

In February 2019, Chelsea Manning was subpoenaed to appear before a grand jury in Virginia in the case.^[359] When Manning condemned the secrecy of the hearings and refused to testify, she was jailed for contempt of court on 8 March 2019.^{[360][361][362][363]} On 16 May 2019, Manning refused to testify before a new grand jury investigating Assange, stating that she "believe[d] this grand jury seeks to undermine the integrity of public discourse with the aim of punishing those who expose any serious, ongoing, and systemic abuses of power by this government". She was returned to jail for the 18-month term of the grand jury with financial penalties.^[364]



Manning in 2017

On 11 April 2019, the day of Assange's arrest in London, the indictment against him was unsealed.^[365] He was charged with conspiracy to commit computer intrusion (i.e. hacking into a government computer), which carries a maximum 5-year sentence.^{[366][367]} The charges stem from the allegation that Assange attempted and failed to crack a password hash so that Chelsea Manning

could use a different username to download classified documents and avoid detection.^[170] This information had been known since 2011 and was a component of Manning's trial; the indictment did not reveal any new information about Assange.^{[170][368]}

On 23 May 2019, Assange was indicted on 17 new charges relating to the Espionage Act of 1917 in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia.^[369] These charges carried a maximum sentence of 170 years in prison.^[370] The Obama administration had debated charging Assange under the Espionage Act, but decided against it out of fear that it would have a negative effect on investigative journalism and could be unconstitutional. *The New York Times* commented that it and other news organisations obtained the same documents as WikiLeaks also without government authorisation. It said it was not clear how WikiLeaks's publications were legally different from other publications of classified information.^{[371][372]}

Most cases brought under the Espionage Act have been against government employees who accessed sensitive information and leaked it to journalists and others.^[373] Prosecuting people for acts related to receiving and publishing information has not previously been tested in court.^[371] In 1975, the Justice Department decided after consideration not to charge journalist Seymour Hersh for reporting on US surveillance of the Soviet Union.^[373] Two lobbyists for a pro-Israel group were charged in 2005 with receiving and sharing classified information about American policy toward Iran. The charges however did not relate to the publication of the documents and the case was dropped in 2009.^{[371][373]}

The Associated Press reported that the indictment raised concerns about media freedom, as Assange's solicitation and publication of classified information is a routine job journalists perform.^[374] Stephen Vladeck, a professor at the University of Texas School of Law, stated that what Assange is accused of doing is factually different from but legally similar to what professional journalists do.^[375] Suzanne Nossel of PEN America said it was immaterial if Assange was a journalist or publisher and pointed instead to First Amendment concerns.^[376]

While some US politicians supported the arrest and indictment of Julian Assange, several non-government organisations for press freedom condemned it. Mark Warner, vice-chairman of the United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said that Assange was "a dedicated accomplice in efforts to undermine American security".^[377] Several jurists, politicians, associations, academics and campaigners viewed the arrest of Assange as an attack on freedom of the press and international law.^{[378][379][380]} The Reporters Without Borders said Assange's arrest would "set a dangerous precedent for journalists, whistle-blowers, and other journalistic sources that the US may wish to pursue in the future".^[381] Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch, wrote that Assange's prosecution for publishing leaked documents is "a major threat to global media freedom".^[382] United Nations human rights expert Agnes Callamard said the indictment exposed him to the risk of serious human rights violations.^[383] Ben Wizner from the American Civil Liberties Union said that prosecuting Assange "for violating US secrecy laws would set an especially dangerous precedent for US journalists, who routinely violate foreign secrecy laws to deliver information vital to the public's interest".^{[384][385]}

Imprisonment in the UK

Since his arrest on 11 April 2019, Assange has been incarcerated in HM Prison Belmarsh in London.^[18]

After examining Assange on 9 May 2019, the United Nations special rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Nils Melzer, concluded that "in addition to physical ailments, Mr Assange showed all symptoms typical for prolonged exposure to psychological torture, including extreme stress, chronic



Aerial view of HM Prison Belmarsh

anxiety and intense psychological trauma."^[386] The British government said it disagreed with some of his observations.^[387] In a later interview with The Canary, Melzer criticised the "secretive grand jury indictment in the United States", the "abusive manner in which Swedish prosecutors disseminated, re-cycled and perpetuated their 'preliminary investigation' into alleged sexual offences", the "termination by Ecuador of Mr Assange's asylum status and citizenship without any form of due process", and the "overt bias against Mr Assange being shown by British judges since his arrest". He said the United States, UK, Sweden and Ecuador were trying to make an example of Assange. He also accused journalists of "spreading abusive and deliberately distorted narratives".^[388] Shortly after Melzer's visit, Assange was transferred to the prison's health care unit.^[389]

On 13 September 2019, District Judge Vanessa Baraitser ruled that Assange would not be released on 22 September when his prison term ended, because he was a flight risk and his lawyer had not applied for bail.^[390] She said when his sentence came to an end, his status would change from a serving prisoner to a person facing extradition.^[390]

On 1 November 2019, Melzer said that Assange's health had continued to deteriorate and his life had become at risk.^{[391][389]} He said that the UK government had not acted on the issue.^{[391][389]}

On 22 November, in an open letter to the UK Home Secretary and Shadow Home Secretary, signed by a group of more than 60 doctors named Doctors for Assange, said Assange's health was declining to an extent that he could die in prison.^[392] According to The Canary and World Socialist Web Site, subsequent attempts by the group, made to the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice Robert Buckland,^{[393][394]} and to Marise Payne, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, also yielded no result.^[395]

On 30 December 2019, Melzer accused the UK government of torturing Julian Assange. He said Assange's "continued exposure to severe mental and emotional suffering ... clearly amounts to psychological torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."^{[396][397]}

On 17 February 2020, the medical journal The Lancet published an open letter from Doctors for Assange, by then comprising 117 medical practitioners from 18 countries,^[398] in which they said Assange was in a "dire state of health due to the effects of prolonged psychological torture in both the Ecuadorian embassy and Belmarsh prison" which could lead to his death and that his "politically motivated medical neglect ... sets a dangerous precedent".^{[399][400][401]} On the same day, the Reporters Without Borders (RSF) media freedoms group posted a separate petition which accused the Trump administration of acting in "retaliation for (Assange's) facilitating major revelations in the international media about the way the United States conducted its wars". The petition said, Assange's publications "were clearly in the public interest and not espionage".^{[402][403]} Australian MPs Andrew Wilkie and George Christensen visited Assange and pressed the UK and Australian governments to intervene to stop him being extradited.^{[404][405]}

On 10 March 2020, the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, IBAHRI, condemned the mistreatment of Julian Assange in the US extradition trial.^[406]

On 25 March 2020, Assange was denied bail after Judge Baraitser rejected his lawyers' argument that his imprisonment would put him at high risk of contracting COVID-19.^[407] She said Assange's past conduct showed how far he was willing to go to avoid extradition.^[407]

On 25 June 2020, Doctors for Assange, at that time numbering 216 medical practitioners from 33 countries, published yet another letter in The Lancet "reiterating their demand to end the torture and medical neglect of Julian Assange",^[408] in which they state their "professional and ethical duty to speak out against, report, and stop torture".^{[409][410]}

In September 2020, an open letter in support of Assange was sent to Boris Johnson with the signatures of two current heads of state and approximately 160 other politicians.^[411] The following month, U.S. Representatives Tulsi Gabbard, a Democrat, and Republican Thomas Massie introduced a resolution opposing the extradition of Assange.^[412] In December 2020, German human rights commissioner Bärbel Kofler cautioned the UK about the need to consider Assange's physical and mental health before deciding whether to extradite him.^[413]

Hearings on extradition to the U.S.

On 2 May 2019, the first hearing was held in London into the U.S. request for Assange's extradition. When asked by Judge Snow whether he consented to extradition, Assange replied, "I do not wish to surrender myself for extradition for doing journalism that has won many, many awards and protected many people".^{[414][415]} On 13 June, British Home Secretary Sajid Javid said he had signed the extradition order.^[416]

Towards the end of 2019, Judge Emma Arbuthnot, who had presided at several of the extradition hearings,^{[417][418]} stepped aside because of a "perception of bias".^[419] Vanessa Baraitser was appointed as the presiding judge.^[419]

On 21 October 2019, Assange appeared at the court for a case management hearing. When Judge Baraitser asked about his understanding of the proceedings, Assange replied:

I don't understand how this is equitable. This superpower had 10 years to prepare for this case and I can't access my writings. It's very difficult where I am to do anything but these people have unlimited resources. They are saying journalists and whistleblowers are enemies of the people. They have unfair advantages dealing with documents. They [know] the interior of my life with my psychologist. They steal my children's DNA. This is not equitable what is happening here.^[420]



The Central Criminal Court of England and Wales (The Old Bailey), London

In February 2020, the court heard legal arguments.^[421] Assange's lawyers contended that he had been charged with political offences and therefore could not be extradited.^[422] The hearings were delayed for months due to requests for extra time from the prosecution and the defence and due to the COVID-19 pandemic.^{[423][424]}

Assange appeared in court on 7 September 2020, facing a new indictment with 18 counts: Conspiracy To Obtain and Disclose National Defense Information, Conspiracy to Commit Computer Intrusions, seven counts of Obtaining National Defense Information, and nine counts of Disclosure of National Defense Information.^[425] The US Department of Justice stated that the new indictment "broaden[s] the scope of ... alleged computer intrusions", alleging that Assange "communicated directly with a leader of the hacking group LulzSec ... and provided a list of targets for LulzSec to hack", as well as "[conspiring] with Army Intelligence Analyst Chelsea Manning to crack a password hash".^[425] Judge Baraitser denied motions by Assange's barristers to dismiss the new charges or to adjourn in order to better respond.^[421]

Some witnesses who testified in September, such as Daniel Ellsberg, did so remotely via video link due to COVID-19 restrictions. Technical problems caused extensive delays.^[426] Amnesty International, PEN Norway, and eight Members of the European Parliament had their access to the livestream revoked. Baraitser responded that the initial invitations had been sent in error.^{[426][427]} Torture victim Khaled el-Masri, who was originally requested as a defence witness, had his testimony reduced to a written statement.^[428] Other witnesses testified that the conditions of imprisonment, which would be likely to worsen upon extradition to the U.S., placed Assange at a high risk of depression and suicide which was exacerbated by him being on the autism spectrum. Psychiatrist Michael Kopelman said that a hidden razor blade had been found in Assange's prison cell.^[429]

Patrick Eller, a former forensics examiner with the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, testified that Assange did not crack and could not have cracked the password mentioned in the U.S. indictment, as Chelsea Manning had intentionally sent only a portion of the password's hash. Moreover, Eller stated that password cracking was a common topic of discussion among other soldiers stationed at Forward Operating Base Hammer, suggesting that Manning's message was unrelated to the classified documents which were already in her possession.^[430] Testimony on 30 September revealed new allegations surrounding the surveillance of the Ecuadorian embassy by UC Global. A former UC Global employee, who spoke anonymously fearing reprisals, stated that the firm undertook "an increasingly sophisticated operation" after it was put into contact with the Trump administration by Sheldon Adelson. According to the employee, intelligence agents discussed plans to break into the embassy to kidnap or poison Assange and attempted to obtain the DNA of a baby who was believed to be Assange's child.^[431]

To coincide with the end of the hearing, Progressive International convened a virtual event called the Belmarsh Tribunal, modelled after the Russell Tribunal, to scrutinise what it calls "the crimes that have been revealed by Assange, and the crimes that have been committed against him, in turn".^[432]

Hearings, including a statement in support of the defence by Noam Chomsky, concluded on 1 October 2020.^[433]

Denial of extradition

On 4 January 2021, Judge Baraitser ruled that Assange could not be extradited to the United States, citing concerns about his mental health and the risk of suicide in a US prison.^{[434][435]} On the same day, President Andres Manuel López Obrador said that Mexico was ready to offer political asylum.^[436] On 6 January, Assange was denied bail, pending an appeal by the United States.^[22] The US prosecutors lodged an appeal on 15 January and have until 29 January to submit detailed grounds for the appeal.^[437]

Writings and opinions

In 2010, Assange said he was a libertarian and that "WikiLeaks is designed to make capitalism more free and ethical".^[438]

Assange has written a few short pieces, including "*State and terrorist conspiracies*" (2006),^[439] "*Conspiracy as governance*" (2006),^[440] "*The hidden curse of Thomas Paine*" (2008),^[441] "*What's new about WikiLeaks?*" (2011),^[442] and the foreword to *Cypherpunks* (2012).^[81] *Cypherpunks* is primarily a transcript of the *World Tomorrow* episode eight, two-part interview between Assange, Jacob Appelbaum, Andy Müller-Maguhn, and Jérémie Zimmermann. In the foreword, Assange said, "the Internet, our greatest tool for emancipation, has been transformed into the most dangerous facilitator of totalitarianism we have ever seen".^[81] He also contributed research to Suelette Dreyfus's *Underground* (1997),^[40] and received a co-writer credit for the Calle 13 song "Multi Viral" (2013).

Assange's book, *When Google Met WikiLeaks*, was published by OR Books on 18 September 2014.^[443] The book recounts when Google CEO Eric Schmidt requested a meeting with Assange, while he was on bail in rural Norfolk, UK. Schmidt was accompanied by Jared Cohen, director of Google Ideas; Lisa Shields, vice-president of the Council on Foreign Relations; and Scott Malcomson, the communications director for the International Crisis Group. Excerpts were published on the Newsweek website, while Assange participated in a Q&A event that was facilitated by the Reddit website and agreed to an interview with *Vogue* magazine.^{[444][445][446]}

In 2011, Assange criticised a *Private Eye* article for portraying WikiLeaks contributor Israel Shamir as antisemitic. According to editor Ian Hislop, Assange called the article "an obvious attempt to deprive [WikiLeaks] of Jewish support and donations" and went on to point out that several journalists involved were Jewish. On 1 March 2011, Assange released a statement in which he said,

Hislop has distorted, invented or misremembered almost every significant claim and phrase. In particular, 'Jewish conspiracy' is completely false, in spirit and word. It is serious and upsetting. We treasure our strong Jewish support and staff, just as we treasure the support from pan-Arab democracy activists and others who share our hope for a just world.^{[447][448]}

In a statement accompanying release of "Yemen Files", Assange said about the U.S. involvement in the Yemen war: "The war in Yemen has produced 3.15 million internally displaced persons. Although the United States government has provided most of the bombs and is deeply involved in the conduct of the war itself reportage on the war in English is conspicuously rare."^[253]

Children

The exact number of Julian Assange's children is not publicly known.^[449] His eldest child, Daniel, was born in 1989 in Australia.^{[43][44]} In 2011, based on WikiLeaks sources, the blog Gawker reported that Assange had at least four children living around the world.^[450] In 2015, in an open letter to French President Hollande, Assange said that one of his children lives in France with the child's mother.^[168] In 2020, Stella Moris-Smith Robertson revealed that she and Assange had two sons, Gabriel, born in 2017, and Max, born in 2019, while Assange was in the embassy.^{[233][451]}

Honours and awards

- 2008, The Economist New Media Award^[452]
- 2009, Amnesty International UK Media Awards^[453]
- 2010, Time Person of the Year, Reader's Choice^[454]
- 2010, Sam Adams Award^[455]
- 2010, Le Monde Readers' Choice Award for Person of the Year^[456]
- 2011, Free Dacia Award^[457]
- 2011, Sydney Peace Foundation Gold Medal^[458]
- 2011, Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism^[459]
- 2011, Voltaire Award for Free Speech^[460]
- 2012, Big Brother Award Italy 2012 "Hero of Privacy"^[461]
- 2013, Global Exchange Human Rights Award, People's Choice^[462]
- 2013, Yoko Ono Lennon Courage Award for the Arts^[463]
- 2013, New York Festivals World's Best TV & Films Silver World Medal^[464]

- 2014, Union of Journalists in Kazakhstan Top Prize^[465]
- 2019, GUE/NGL Galizia prize^[466]
- 2019, Gavin MacFadyen award^[467]
- 2019, Catalan Dignity Prize.^[321]
- 2020, Stuttgart Peace Prize.^[468]

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- *Cypherpunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet*. OR Books, 2012. ISBN 978-1-939293-00-8.
- *When Google Met WikiLeaks*. OR Books, 2014. ISBN 978-1-939293-57-2.^[443]
- *The WikiLeaks Files: The World According to The US Empire*. By WikiLeaks. Verso Books, 2016. ISBN 978-1-784786-21-2 (with an Introduction by Julian Assange)^[470]

Filmography

Producer	
Title	Year
<u><i>Collateral Murder</i></u>	2010
<u><i>The World Tomorrow</i></u>	2012 (host)
<u><i>Mediastan</i></u>	2013
<u><i>The Engineer</i></u>	2013 ^[471]

As himself

- *The War You Don't See* (2010)^[472]
- *The Simpsons* (2012) (cameo; episode "At Long Last Leave")^[473]
- *Citizenfour* (2014)^[474]
- *The Yes Men Are Revolting* (2014)^[475]
- *Terminal F/Chasing Edward Snowden* (2015)^[476]
- *Asylum* (2016)^[477]
- *Risk* (2016)^[478]
- *Architects of Denial* (2017)^[479]
- *The New Radical* (2017)^[480]

See also

- List of people who took refuge in a diplomatic mission
- List of peace activists

- Lauri Love, who in 2018 won an appeal in the High Court of England against extradition to the United States
- Gary McKinnon, whose extradition to the United States was blocked in 2012 by then-Home Secretary Theresa May

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Further reading

Books

- Nick Cohen, *You Can't Read this Book: Censorship in an Age of Freedom* (2012).
- Fowler, Andrew (11 April 2011). *The Most Dangerous Man in the World: The Explosive True Story of Julian Assange and the Lies, Cover-ups and Conspiracies He Exposed* (<https://archive.org/details/mostdangerousman0000fowl>). Skyhorse Publishing Inc. ISBN 9781616084899.

Essays

- Robert Manne, "The cypherpunk revolutionary: Julian Assange," *The Monthly*, March 2011. Reprinted in Robert Manne, *Making Trouble: Essays Against the New Australian Complacency* (Melbourne: Black Inc. Publishing, 2011).
- Andrew O'Hagan, "Ghosting: Julian Assange," *London Review of Books*, vol. 36, no. 5 (6 March 2014).


Films

- *Underground: The Julian Assange Story* (2012), Australian TV drama that premiered at the 2012 Toronto International Film Festival.
- *Julian* (2012), Australian short film about nine-year-old Julian Assange. The film won several awards and prizes.
- *The Fifth Estate* (2013), a thriller that Assange claimed was a 'serious propaganda attack' on WikiLeaks and its staff.
- *Mediastan* (2013), documentary produced by Assange; to challenge that of *The Fifth Estate*.
- *We Steal Secrets: The Story of WikiLeaks* (2013), American documentary.
- *Risk* (2016), American documentary.
- *Hacking Justice* (2017), documentary.

External links

- Works by Julian Assange (<https://www.gutenberg.org/author/Assange,+Julian>) at Project Gutenberg
- Works by or about Julian Assange (<https://archive.org/search.php?query=%28%28subject%3A%22Assange%2C%20Julian%20Paul%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Assange%2C%20Julian%20P%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Assange%2C%20J%2E%20P%2E%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Julian%20Paul%20Assange%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Julian%20P%2E%20Assange%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22J%2E%20P%2E%20Assange%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Assange%2C%20Julian%22%20OR%20subject%3A%22Julian%20Assange%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Julian%20Paul%20Assange%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Julian%20P%2E%20Assange%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22J%2E%20P%2E%20Assange%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22J%2E%20Paul%20Assange%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Assange%2C%20Julian%20P%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Assange%2C%20J%2E%20P%2E%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Assange%2C%20J%2E%20Paul%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Julian%20Assange%22%20OR%20creator%3A%22Assange%2C%20Julian%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Julian%20Paul%20Assang>)

e%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Julian%20P%2E%20Assange%22%20OR%20title%3A%22J%2E%20P%2E%20Assange%22%20OR%20title%3A%22Julian%20Assange%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Julian%20Paul%20Assange%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Julian%20P%2E%20Assange%22%20OR%20description%3A%22J%2E%20P%2E%20Assange%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Assange%2C%20Julian%20Paul%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Assange%2C%20Julian%20P%2E%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Julian%20Assange%22%20OR%20description%3A%22Assange%2C%20Julian%22%29%29%20AND%20%28-mediatype:s oftware%29) at Internet Archive

- Julian Assange (https://www.ted.com/speakers/julian_assange) at TED 
- Why Judge Baltasar Garzon has taken on the defense of Julian Assange (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roSRRRn7ohU>)

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