

Christine Assange, mother of WikiLeaks' founder, speaks with the WSWS

By Richard Phillips
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Christine Assange, the mother of WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange, spoke with the World Socialist Web Site yesterday about the escalating legal conspiracy against her son and his recent application for political asylum in Ecuador. She explained the dangers now facing her son in the face of the US-led campaign, which is being assisted by the Australian Labor government, to frame up Assange. If Assange is extradited to Sweden on dubious sexual assault allegations, he faces the real possibility that he will be transferred to America and brought before a US Grand Jury on bogus espionage charges.

Richard Phillips: The UK's Supreme Court rejected Julian's legal bid to reopen his final appeal against extradition to Sweden. Were you surprised at the decision?

Christine Assange: No, I had been expecting it. The whole proceedings in Britain indicated that the Supreme Court was not going to challenge the European Arrest Warrant, even though it knew that the British people have been lobbying for it to be changed for years.

The extradition warrant should have been rejected on the grounds that it was being used for questioning. The Swedish prosecutor had refused to interview Julian when he was there [in Sweden] and refused to interview him via Mutual Legal Assistance. That is the stated way [under the European Arrest Warrant Framework Decision] that people can be interviewed in another country. The UK and Sweden are signatories to this agreement.

The British government is completely happy with the whole process. It has executive powers allowing it to intervene, overrule the courts and reject an extradition but it has refused. The British government did that a few years ago when it came to the [extradition of] Chilean dictator Pinochet. In other words, the British government over-ruled the extradition of a dictator, but supports the extradition of someone who has exposed the crimes of the US, British and other governments.

RP: The Supreme Court accepted the Swedish prosecutor as a "judicial authority." This was another legal precedent.

CA: Yes, that's right. One of the major problems with the European arrest warrant system is that they [the authorities] do not have to present a prima facie case. They can just tick a box, which means that it's open to abuse. Many people have been unhappy about this, but the courts have decided to uphold it and I think they've done so under pressure from the US.

RP: What's your reaction to Julian's application for asylum in

Ecuador?

CA: Some people have said he is trying to run away, but they [the authorities] have backed him into a corner where he has nowhere else to go.

Julian is the only person in these proceedings who has followed the law. Everybody else has been either breaching protocols or procedures. The Supreme Court was so focused on getting him over there [to Sweden] that it actually said he had been charged, when in fact, as everybody knows, there are only allegations. It also brought in new information into an appeal court, which is unheard of.

Dangerous precedents are being set all the time because of US pressure on other people's governments, and that's what happened with the Australian Extradition Act.

Julian's asylum application is great. He has gone through all the court procedures but had his legal and human rights abused, and the Australian government has abandoned him. US politicians and commentators have called for him to be assassinated, and the government is trying to get him on any charge it can. According to the UN special rapporteur on torture, Bradley Manning has been tortured. The US is trying to get him to such a degraded state that he will falsely implicate Julian.

There are the emails from Stratfor, which reveal that there is an existing, sealed Grand Jury indictment on Julian, so he has every reason to fear for his life.

RP: Do you know how long the asylum application will take?

CA: No. The Ecuadorian government has to consider the application in detail and all the ramifications surrounding it.

I've heard that there already is an editorial in the *Washington Post* that indicates the US will be putting pressure on Ecuador through trade sanctions. America is doing what it always does, and that is to bully smaller nations. I hope that Ecuador decides on principle to protect Julian because it is the right thing to do and that the world will support it.

The principle of political asylum has to be supported. The US, Sweden, the UK and Australia are signatories to this principle, but they only pay lip-service to it if it suits them politically.

RP: The Gillard government claims that it's providing consular assistance to Julian and that it knows nothing about a Grand Jury indictment. What's your response?

CA: The prime minister, the attorney general and the foreign minister act like US-made robots that have only got room for one or two chips. They just repeat the same inane, factually inaccurate

statements, over and over again, hoping that journalists won't challenge them.

Journalists, unfortunately, are not challenging them and they have to begin doing it. When the government says it has given Assange full consular assistance, journalists should specifically ask what it has done.

Julian, his lawyers and the WikiLeaks staff all inform me that they have had no support since December 2010 and that all the [Australian] Department of Foreign Affairs has done is come to the hearings. The government's people don't acknowledge Julian in any way. They sit separately, and then they scurry away to report back on what has happened in the court.

Julian has asked for specific help from the Australian government [on a number of points] and all of them have been denied.

He requested that the Australian government ask the Swedish foreign minister, prime minister and attorney general to desist from publicly defaming Julian before any possible court hearing, because it threatens his rights to a fair trial. The Australian government refused to make this request.

He also asked the Australian government to request that those commentators and politicians in the US who have been calling out since 2010 for his assassination, in graphic and violent terms, to retract those statements. Canberra refused to do so.

If Julian is extradited to Sweden, uncharged and unquestioned, he will be put in a remand prison on indefinite detention, in solitary confinement and available only to his Swedish lawyers. He has requested the Australian government to ask that he be given bail. The government refused to even ask for that.

Fourthly, Julian's lawyers requested that the Australian government ask the Swedish government to organise for Julian be questioned via Mutual Legal Assistance. A 1971 Swedish Supreme Court ruled that this was the appropriate and proportionate way to question someone in another country on a minor charge. Even the High Court in the UK questioned why Swedish prosecutors did not do this. The Australian government refused to ask.

If Julian does end up serving a sentence in Sweden, he has asked the government to request that he serve any or all of that in Australia, under the prisoner exchange scheme. The government won't ask for that.

Julian asked that at the end of proceedings in London or Sweden he be given safe passage back to Australia—i.e., so that he is not kidnapped by the CIA, or have a Grand Jury indictment served by the US. The Australian government also refused to do that.

Should he end up in the US in a military prison, Julian's lawyers have requested that no special administrative measures be applied. The Australian government has not even made that request.

[Foreign Minister] Bob Carr says ad nauseam that Australia has contacted the Swedish government and been given assurances that all due processes will be observed. But Sweden has been in breach of due process from day one, so there's no reason that it will suddenly be now observed there.

Carr says Australia can't interfere in the affairs of another country. These are weasel words. It is quite normal for the government to talk to another government and ask them to drop an

extradition if the courts aren't doing the right thing. Carr claimed last week that he didn't know what a sealed Grand Jury indictment was. What sort of Australian foreign minister wouldn't know this?

There are only two propositions here: either the prime minister, attorney general and foreign minister are grossly incompetent and should resign immediately, or they are deliberately misleading the Australian population and acting as stooges for the American government, and this is what most people believe.

The Australian government is wilfully misleading people and have even introduced legislation that makes it easier to extradite Julian from here.

RP: How do you see the legal assault on Julian and the escalating attack on democratic rights internationally?

CA: It's like a boil that's about to burst. We've all seen the Truman Show movie. It's as if WikiLeaks has ripped back the roof cover on our Truman Show and we're now seeing the puppet masters, the producer. The network is unhappy that the bit players have seen how the show is being produced, but it is too late because the Pandora's Box is open. People have now seen something of the power and corruption going on behind the scenes, and this is distributed around the world, through the Internet, within seconds.

Governments can't close down the Internet but they're ushering in laws everywhere, with the US setting the trend, introducing police-state measures and restricting the democratic rights of its people. The Western world is now seeing what the third world has had to live with for years and years.

If the people don't stand up and fight for freedom for Julian Assange, Bradley Manning and WikiLeaks, then they can expect decades of oppression. The rights we have today were won because generations before us struggled for them. Everyone therefore has an inherited and collective responsibility to stand up and defend these rights for their children and grand-children.

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