

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS

7 January 2021

Hon. Scott Morrison MP
Prime Minister of Australia
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

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Dear Prime Minister

RE: JULIAN ASSANGE

I am writing to you on behalf of Amnesty International's 10 million global supporters to ask you to act in regards to the case of Julian Assange. Please use your access and relationships to urge US President Donald Trump and President-elect Joe Biden to drop the charges against Assange.

We were heartened to learn that the Magistrate Court in London did not approve the extradition of Assange to the US where he would face a risk of ill-treatment in prison. However, the charges against him should never have been brought in the first place, and it is now the time to pressure the US to drop the charges.

The US extradition request was based on charges directly related to the publication of leaked classified documents as part of Assange's work with Wikileaks. Publishing such information is a cornerstone of media freedom and the public's right to information about government wrongdoing. Publishing information in the public interest is protected under international human rights law and should not be criminalised.

In the US, Assange faces 18 charges, 17 of them under the Espionage Act; and one under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. He would also face a real risk of serious human rights violations due to detention conditions that could amount to torture or other ill-treatment, including prolonged solitary confinement. Assange is the first publisher to face charges under the Espionage Act.

I understand that the Department of Foreign Affairs has made many offers to provide consulate assistance that went unanswered. I also note that you have stated that Assange could return to Australia if he were to be released from detention. Whilst this assistance is important, now is the time to make direct representations to President Trump, and President-elect Biden, to drop the charges against Assange.

Please urge President Trump to drop all charges against Assange in his final days in office. Given that President-elect Biden is to be inaugurated in coming weeks, I also urge you to ask him to make dropping Assange's charges a priority in the first 100 days of him being in office.

When President-elect Biden was vice-president, charges against Mr Assange were contemplated but not pursued for fear of creating a precedent that might later be applied to journalists. It is also important to note that Chelsea Manning, a key Assange-source of leaks, had much of her unprecedented 35-year prison sentence commuted. The President-elect is well-placed to decide to drop the charges but must be pressed by you and your government.

More than 107,300 people in Australia, and over 400,000 people internationally, have signed the Amnesty International petition to call on the US to drop the charges. Assange's case is one that Australians are passionate about, and they expect more from their government in such a case.

For further information, or to discuss and organise a meeting, please contact Joel MacKay at joel.mackay@amnesty.org.au or 0424 242 112.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Klintworth', written in a cursive style.

Sam Klintworth
National Director
Amnesty International Australia