

Summaries of Witness Statements in Defence of Julian Assange

September 2020

Daniel Ellsberg

Pentagon Papers Whistleblower

“My own actions in relation to the Pentagon Papers and the consequences of their publication have been acknowledged to have performed such a radical change of understanding. I view the WikiLeaks publications of 2010 and 2011 to be of comparable importance.”

What had changed, Ellsberg said, was that in Afghanistan (and in Iraq), horrific abuses, illegal killings and war crimes had become normalized,

“The Espionage Act does not allow for whistleblowing, to allow you to say you were informing the polity. So I did not have a fair trial, no one since me had a fair trial on these charges, and Julian Assange cannot remotely get a fair trial under those charges if he were tried.”

In Chelsea Manning’s court-martial, the government was forced to admit that it could not point to a single death that resulted from WikiLeaks’ releases.

John Goetz

Der Spiegel Journalist

WikiLeaks spearheaded a “very rigorous redaction process,” beginning with the Afghanistan files. WikiLeaks asked the White House for any technical assistance they could provide to assist with redactions. That request was met with “derision.”

In February 2011, *Guardian* reporters David Leigh and Luke Harding published a book with a password to the unencrypted file set as the title of a chapter. German magazine *Die Freitag* published this information, which allowed eagle-eyed observers to use that password to unlock the files and publish them online in full. Most notably, they were released on Cryptome, a “rival leak site” as described by the government, but they were also mirrored on several other sites, so they could not be taken down and they were out of WikiLeaks’ hands. Assange and other WikiLeaks staff called the State Department’s emergency phone line at the time warning that sources had been named, but they were ignored.

Assange had tried to stop *Die Freitag* from publishing information that would lead to the release of unredacted files.

Jennifer Robinson

Barrister

US congressman Dana Rohrabacher proposed that Assange identify the source for the 2016 election publications “in return for some form of pardon, assurance or agreement which would both benefit President Trump politically and prevent US indictment and extradition.” Assange did not provide any source information to Rohrabacher, and instead Assange and Robinson urged the Congressman to raise the First Amendment implications of any US indictment with President Trump. The defense revealed this pardon offer to demonstrate the politicized nature of Assange’s prosecution. The fact that it could be dropped if Assange provided source information, and the fact that it was brought after Assange declined to provide that information, belies claims of a desire to simply prosecute a crime.

Dean Yates

Former Reuters Baghdad Bureau Chief

“The US knows how devastating *Collateral Murder* is, how shameful it is to the military — they are fully aware that experts believe the shooting of the van was a potential war crime. They know that the banter between the pilots echoed the language that kids would use on video games.”

Assange’s release of the video, along with the Rules of Engagement accompanying it, proved that the U.S. had lied to Yates.

“I know [Reuters journalists] Namir and Saeed would have remained forgotten statistics in a war that killed countless human beings, possibly hundreds of thousands of civilians. Had it not been for Chelsea Manning and Julian... the truth of what happened on that street in Baghdad on July 12, 2007, would not have been brought to the world. What Assange did was 100% an act of truth-telling, exposing to the world what the war in Iraq in fact was and how the US military behaved and lied. The video was picked up by thousands of news organizations worldwide, sparking global outrage and condemnation of US military tactics in Iraq.”

defend.wikileaks.org/extradition-hearing