

Excerpts from Expert Witness Statements in Defence of Julian Assange

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Paul Rogers

Emeritus Professor of Peace Studies at Bradford University

I have been asked whether, in light of all of the above, his opinions can indeed be appropriately categorised as “political opinions” and which might... place him at risk... of a politically motivated trial.

In my opinion Mr Assange’s expressed views, opinions and activities demonstrate very clearly “political opinions”. The clash of those opinions with those of successive US administrations, but in particular the present administration which has moved to prosecute him for publications made almost a decade ago, suggest that he is regarded primarily as a political opponent who must experience the full wrath of government, even with suggestions of punishment by death made by senior officials including the current President.

Trevor Timm

Executive Director of *Freedom of the Press Foundation*

The decision to indict Julian Assange on allegations of a “conspiracy” between a publisher and his source or potential sources, and for the publication of truthful information, encroaches on fundamental press freedoms...[it] is a massive and unprecedented escalation in Trump’s war on journalism, and it is no exaggeration to say the First Amendment itself is at risk...[it] can be considered to be the most significant and terrifying threat to the First Amendment in the 21st century...This is almost a consensus opinion among press freedom groups and media lawyers who have looked at this indictment. This is why newspapers, even those who have criticized Mr Assange, have condemned this indictment...The Trump administration is moving to explicitly criminalize national security journalism, and if this prosecution is allowed to go forward, dozens of reporters at the New York Times, Washington Post and elsewhere would also be in danger.

defend.wikileaks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Statement-of-Professor-Paul-Rogers.pdf

defend.wikileaks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Trevor-Timm-statement.pdf

defend.wikileaks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Clive-Stafford-Smith-witness-statement.pdf

defend.wikileaks.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Mark-Feldstein-witness-statement.pdf

Clive Stafford-Smith

Founder of *Reprive*

Before 2001, I would never have believed that my government would do what it did. We are talking about criminal offenses of torture, kidnapping, rendition, holding people without the rule of law and, sad to say, murder.

I have had a project of comparing the methodologies that my government uses on my clients to what they used in Spanish Inquisition...hanging people by the wrist while their shoulders slowly dislocate...

The U.S. drone campaign... was resulting in paid informants giving false information about innocent people who were then killed in strikes.

Mark Feldstein

Chair in Broadcast Journalism, University of Maryland

Assange’s publishing of classified records...has exposed on a worldwide scale significant governmental duplicity, corruption, and abuse of power that had previously been hidden from the public.

American forces in Iraq routinely turned a blind eye when the US-backed government there brutalized detainees, subjecting them to beatings, whippings, burnings, electric shock, and sodomy

In Afghanistan, the US deployed a secret “black” unit of special forces to hunt down “high value” Taliban leaders for “kill or capture” without trial.

Julian Assange faces lifetime imprisonment for publishing truthful information about governmental criminality and abuse of power, precisely what the First Amendment was written to protect. In the end, however, this case [is] about more than Assange or journalism. It is about the right of citizens to have the information they need to participate in a democracy. A free society depends on democratic decision-making by an informed public. And an informed public depends on a free and independent press that can serve as a check on governmental abuse of power—the kinds of abuses that WikiLeaks made public. “In a free society, we are supposed to know the truth,” a US congressman said when WikiLeaks first began publishing this batch of documents. “In a society where truth becomes treason, we are in trouble.”