

All of us are in danger': John Pilger delivers a chilling warning from Julian Assange

(transcript)

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it's an honor today to be here. I think Roger has just arrived to introduce. Roger Waters as well as making brilliant music Roger has been speaking out for the rights of men and women for many years and I thank him warmly for initiating this extraordinary event to celebrate and defend Julian Assange.

Roger regards Julian as a hero and so do I and it'll be a pleasure to introduce Julian's brother Gabriel who is here from Melbourne.

Gabriel went with me recently to visit Julian and Belmarsh prison and was deeply moved by the treatment of his brother. Behind us here of course is the Home Office, the polite name for Britain's interior ministry.

The behaviour of the British government towards Julian Assange is a disgrace; a profanity on the very notion of human rights. It's no exaggeration to say that the treatment and persecution of Julian Assange is the way dictatorships treat a political prisoner.

There is one reason for this: Julian and WikiLeaks have performed a historic public service by giving millions of people facts, and why and how their governments deceive them secretly and often illegally. Why they invade countries, why they spy on us,

Julian has been singled out for special treatment for one reason only: he is a truth teller.

His case is meant to send a warning to every journalist and every publisher; the kind of warning that has no place in a democracy I spoke to Julian at the weekend - he'd been just allowed to have his first proper exercise. He was allowed to pace up and down in a small bitumen yard.

However at Belmarsh prison they have a sense of humour. On the walls facing the so called 'exercise yard' are happy clappy words about the "blades of grass beneath your feet" but there's no grass.

Julian is locked up for more than 21 hours, sometimes longer. It's four months. Four months since he was dragged out of the Ecuadorian Embassy literally in brutal contravention of international law.

It's four months and he is still denied the documents and the basic tools to prepare his case against an outrageous demand for his extradition to the United States where he faces incarceration and almost certainly torture, and yet he is not allowed today to call his American lawyers. He is not allowed access to vital documents; he is not allowed access to a computer; he's confined in a single cell in the hospital wing where he is isolated most of the time from other people.

All this, all this because he infringed bail, a bail order the merest of offenses and he sought political asylum from the threat to his life that awaited him in Trump's America.

When I asked Julian what he'd like me to say today he was adamant say: "It's not just me. It's much wider. It's all of us, it's all journalists and all publishers who do their job who are in danger."

In other words the danger Julian Assange faces can easily spread to the present and past editors of The Guardian The New York Times Der Spiegel, El Pais in Spain, the Sydney Morning Herald and many other newspapers and media outlets around the world that published the WikiLeaks revelations about the lies and crimes of our governments.

Never before in my career as a journalist have I known such an attack on our most basic freedom to publish and to know.

The message is loud and clear: be careful or you too will end up in an American hellhole.

Journalism is not a crime in the United States - not yet - but if Julian is extradited and convicted it will become a crime. Journalism that does its job and tells people what governments do behind their backs in their name.

Julian is not an American he is an Australian citizen WikiLeaks which he founded is not a US-based publication, but the meaning of his extradition could not be clearer.

No matter who you are, or where you are, if you expose the crimes of government you'll be hunted down, kidnapped and sent to the US as a spy.

17 out of the 18 charges that Julian faces in America relate to the routine work of an investigative journalist which is protected under the First Amendment of the US Constitution. The 18th charge about hacking doesn't even relate to him. And even the prosecution over there say that the whole thing is a sham.

The US prosecutors know it's a sham. A federal judge recently declared effectively it's a sham.

The British government know it's a sham.

The Australian government knows it's a sham. That's why Julian has been locked up more than 21 hours a day in a maximum-security prison and treated worse than a murderer. Why is that? Why is he not protected by international law as the United Nations working party has demanded?

He is to be made an example. that's why. What happens to Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning is meant to intimidate us too and frighten us into silence, and the moment that we fall silent it's over.

By defending Julian Assange we defend our most sacred rights. Speak up now or wake up one morning to the silence of a new kind of tyranny

The choice is ours.

Thank you

(08:16)