



[Latest / Media Center](#)

[PRESS RELEASES](#) | [SPECIAL PROCEDURES](#)

UN Special Rapporteur on Torture urges UK government to halt imminent extradition of Julian Assange

06 February 2024

Share

GENEVA (6 February 2024) – The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Alice Jill Edwards, today urged the Government of the United Kingdom (UK) to halt the possible extradition of Julian Assange to the United States of America.

She called on British authorities to consider Julian Assange's appeal based on substantial fears that, if extradited, he would be at risk of treatment amounting to torture or other forms of ill-treatment or punishment.

"Julian Assange suffers from a long standing and recurrent depressive disorder. He is assessed as being at risk of committing suicide. In the United States, he faces numerous charges, including under the Espionage Act of 1917 for alleged unlawful releases of diplomatic and other cables and documents via WikiLeaks. If extradited, he could be detained in prolonged isolation while awaiting trial, or as an inmate. If convicted, he could be sentenced to up to 175 years in prison," Edwards said.

"The risk of being placed in prolonged solitary confinement, despite his precarious mental health status, and to receive a potentially disproportionate sentence raises questions as to whether Mr. Assange's extradition to the United States would be compatible with the United Kingdom's international human rights obligations, particularly under article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, as well as respective articles 3 of the UN Convention against Torture and the European Convention on Human Rights," the Special Rapporteur said.

"Diplomatic assurances of humane treatment provided by the Government of the United States are not a sufficient guarantee to protect Mr. Assange against such risk," Edwards said. "They are not legally binding, are limited in their scope, and the person the assurances aim to protect may have no recourse if they are violated."

"I call on the Government of the United Kingdom to carefully review Mr. Assange's extradition order with a view to ensuring full compliance with the absolute and non-derogable prohibition of *refoulement* to torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and to take all

the necessary measures to safeguard Mr. Assange's physical and mental health," the expert said.

A final domestic appeal after a long-running legal battle on Assange's extradition is scheduled to take place before the High Court in London on 20-21 February.

Julian Assange faces **18 criminal counts** in the United States for his alleged role in unlawfully obtaining and disclosing classified documents related to national defence, including evidence exposing alleged war crimes. He has been detained in the UK since 2019, where he is currently being held at Belmarsh prison.

Dr. Alice Jill Edwards, [Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#)

Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the **Special Procedures** of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent of any government or organisation and serve in their individual capacity.

UN Human Rights, Country Page – **[United Kingdom](#)**

For more information and **media requests**, please contact Mr. Alessandro Marra (alessandro.marra@un.org/+41 22 928 93 21)

For media enquiries regarding other UN independent experts, please contact Maya Derouaz (maya.derouaz@un.org) or Dharisha Indraguptha (dharisha.indraguptha@un.org)

Follow news related to the UN's independent human rights experts on Twitter [@UN_SPExperts](#)

Follow news related to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment on Twitter [@DrAliceJEdwards](#)

Tags

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Torture and inhuman treatment

Related

PRESS RELEASES

[DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS APPROVES ABOUT \\$7.2 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR TORTURE SURVIVORS](#)

PRESS RELEASES

[HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS APPROVES ABOUT \\$7,8 MILLION IN GRANTS FOR TORTURE SURVIVORS](#)

STATEMENTS

[MESSAGE ON THE INTERNATIONAL DAY IN SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF TORTURE](#)

Global Social Channels

Latest

[Feature Stories](#)

[Media Center](#)

[Meetings & Events](#)

Resources

[Databases](#)

[Library](#)

[Publications](#)

Connect

[Contact Us](#)

[Follow us](#)

[Work With Us](#)

Donate

Contact

[Copyrights](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of use](#)