

UK: Assange extradition refusal welcome, but UK complicit in setting 'terrible precedent'



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UK

'The UK government should never have so willingly assisted the US in its unrelenting pursuit of Assange' - Nils Muižnieks

Responding to the decision by the Magistrate's Court in London not to approve the extradition of Julian Assange to the US where he would face a risk of ill-treatment in prison, Nils Muižnieks, Amnesty International's Europe Director, said:

"We welcome the fact that Julian Assange will not be sent to the USA and that the court acknowledged that due to his health concerns, he would be at risk of ill-treatment in the US prison system.

"But the charges against him should never have been brought in the first place. The charges were politically-motivated, and the UK government should never have so willingly assisted the US in its unrelenting pursuit of Assange.

"The fact that the ruling is correct and saves Assange from extradition, does not absolve the UK from having engaged in this politically-motivated process at the behest of the USA and putting media freedom and freedom of expression on trial.

"It has set a terrible precedent for which the US is responsible and the UK government is complicit."

The US extradition request is 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.

If extradited to the US, Julian Assange could have faced trial on 18 charges - 17 under the Espionage Act, and one under the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act. He would also have faced 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.

Julian Assange is the first publisher to face charges under the Espionage Act.

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