

Resolution Calling on the US Executive Branch to Drop All Charges Against Julian Assange

Whereas the library profession historically has upheld the First Amendment and the values of press freedom, the freedom to read and the freedom to publish;

Whereas "[t]he American Library Association opposes any use of governmental prerogative that leads to intimidation of individuals that prevents them from exercising their rights to hold opinions without interference, and to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas" (ALA Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights)¹;

Whereas the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has stated that "[t]he prosecution of Julian Assange poses a grave threat to press freedom" and that "[b]ringing criminal charges against a publisher for the publication of truthful information establishes a dangerous precedent that can be used to target all news organizations that hold the government accountable by publishing its secrets"²;

Whereas with regard to Assange's case, Amnesty International has stated that "[p]ublishing information that is in the public interest is a cornerstone of media freedom and the public's right to information about government wrongdoing" and is "protected under international human rights law and should not be criminalized"³;

Whereas PEN International has noted that "[Assange's] prosecution raises profound concerns about freedom of the press under the First Amendment of the US Constitution and sends a dangerous signal to journalists and publishers worldwide"⁴;

Whereas the US government is seeking to extradite Assange in order to prosecute him under the Espionage Act, which, as RSF/Reporters Without Borders has noted, lacks a public interest defense,⁵ making it impossible for Assange to defend himself on the grounds that his publishing activities are protected under international human rights law; and

Whereas organizations advocating for civil liberties, human rights and press freedom, including the ACLU, RSF/Reporters Without Borders, PEN International, Amnesty International, and the International Federation of Journalists have called on the US to drop all charges against Assange, now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the American Library Association (ALA), on behalf of its members, calls on the US executive branch to cease all efforts to extradite and prosecute Julian Assange.

¹ American Library Association. "The Universal Right to Free Expression: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights".

<https://www.ala.org/advocacy/intfreedom/librarybill/interpretations/universallright>

² American Civil Liberties Union. "ACLU Comment on Julian Assange Extradition Ruling". <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/aclu-comment-julian-assange-extradition-ruling>

³ Amnesty International. "US/UK: 'Travesty of justice' as extradition appeal fails to recognise that it would be unsafe for Julian Assange to be sent to the US".

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/12/us-uk-travesty-of-justice-as-extradition-appeal-fails-to-recognise-that-it-would-be-unsafe-for-julian-assange-to-be-sent-to-the-us/>

⁴ PEN International. "United Kingdom / USA: PEN Centres Condemn Decision to Allow the Extradition of Julian Assange". <https://pen-international.org/news/uk-usa-pen-centres-condemn-decision-to-allow-the-extradition-of-julian-assange>

⁵ RSF/Reporters Without Borders. "RSF condemns the UK High Court's decision allowing for Julian Assange's extradition to the US, and calls for his immediate release". <https://rsf.org/en/news/rsf-condemns-uk-high-courts-decision-allowing-julian-assanges-extradition-us-and-calls-his-immediate>