

*Former Australian lawmakers  
demand Julian Assange's release*

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Canberra, August 29 (RHC/China Daily)-- Nine former Australian lawmakers have called on Prime Minister Anthony Albanese to end the incarceration of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, saying "enough is enough".

In an open letter to Albanese, copied to Attorney General Mark Dreyfus, former state and federal attorneys general said Canberra needs to renew its endeavors to have Assange released from the United Kingdom's Belmarsh Prison, where he has been detained for four years awaiting extradition to the United States to face espionage charges.

Former Australian diplomat Alison Broinowski said the U.S. has "backed itself into a corner" for 13 years over the issue. She told China Daily that U.S. President Joe Biden would not make any concessions in the Assange case when Biden, as a congressman, called Assange a "high-tech terrorist."

"The Labor government here in Australia has, on several occasions, said 'enough is enough' for Julian Assange. But that in itself is not enough," Broinowski said. "They (the U.S.) must see Australia is lacking determination and they would be right," she said, adding that Albanese raised the issue of Assange recently with Washington but "got nowhere." "It's another example of Australia's surrender of sovereignty to the U.S., and many in Australia are ashamed of it," she said.

One of those who signed the letter to Albanese was Lara Giddings, who served as premier of Tasmania from January 2011 until March 2014 and was the state's attorney general from 2008 to 2011.

"Regardless of what views people might have of Julian Assange, this man has had his freedom taken away from him for over 11 years," she said on August 18th.

"His ongoing detention cannot be justified regardless of the rights or wrongs of his WikiLeaks expose. He does not deserve to be left to the mercy of the United States' legal system, where, if found guilty, he may well die in jail."

Academic and commentator Binoy Kampmark shared similar sentiments in an article published on the CounterPunch website on August 17th. "At every stage of its proceedings against Julian Assange, the US Imperium has shown little by way of tempering its vengeful impulses," he wrote.

"The WikiLeaks publisher, in uncovering the sordid, operational details of a global military power, would always have to pay." Kampmark added that if Assange is extradited from the UK to the US, he "will disappear into a carceral, life-ending dystopia".

Whether the current attempt to get some action on Assange will have any impact on the government remains to be seen.

The nine former attorneys general jointly called for an end to the "inhumane, indefinite detention" of an Australian citizen. "Powerful countries will do whatever they can to hide uncomfortable truths, and they don't care about the collateral human damage," said Bernard Collaery, one of the signatories, as quoted by Australian commentary website Pearls and Irritations.

Former federal attorney general Michael Duffy said in the same article that the continuing detention of Assange sets a "dangerous precedent".

Environmental activist Mitchel Cohen told China Daily that Assange is locked away in a British prison and "fighting for his life." "The U.S. government seeks to bring this Australian citizen to the United States for a show trial and then lock him up forever, if they don't assassinate him en route," Cohen said. "It is incumbent on all to demand an end to his incarceration and torment by the US and British governments."



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