

Belmarsh Tribunal to convene in Washington D.C. and demand the release of the truth



Washington, December 4 (RHC)-- On Saturday, December 9, 2023, the Belmarsh Tribunal will return to Washington D.C. for its most urgent session since its inception in 2020. The Court calls for the release of Julian Assange, editor of Wikileaks, as his possible extradition from the United Kingdom to the United States reaches its denouement with his final hearing in the United Kingdom scheduled for early 2024.

Pressure is mounting on U.S. authorities to drop charges against Assange for his groundbreaking journalism. U.S. Congressmen from both parties are pressuring Attorney General Merrick Garland, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and President Joe Biden to stop pursuing Assange under the Espionage Act. At the same time, Australian MPs are waging a major bipartisan campaign to demand that the U.S. Department of Justice end its legal campaign against Australian citizen Assange.

Since May 2020, Progressive International has led a series of global actions in the fight against Julian Assange's extradition to the United States - including the Belmarsh Tribunal, which convened parliamentarians and senior public figures in a virtual courtroom (2020), at Church House, Westminster (2021), the People's Forum in New York City (2022), the National Press Club in Washington D. C. (2023), and the Great Hall at the University of Sydney, Australia (2023), to hear expert testimony on Wikileaks' contributions to public knowledge and the threat to press freedom posed by the case against Julian Assange.

According to reports from Capitol Hill, the December Court helped launch a new congressional effort to have the charges against Assange dropped by allies such as U.S. Representatives Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) and Ilhan Omar (D-MN).

The Washington D.C. Tribunal. - organized by Progressive International in partnership with the Wau Holland Foundation - will be held at the National Press Club, where Assange first premiered the video Collateral Murder, documenting war crimes committed by the U.S. military in Al-Amin al-Thaniyah, Iraq, just miles from the Virginia prison where Assange could be held in the event of extradition.

Inspired by the Russell-Sartre Tribunals of the Vietnam War, the Belmarsh Tribunal brings together a range of expert witnesses - from constitutional lawyers to acclaimed journalists and human rights advocates - to present evidence of these attacks on press freedom and the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

This DC session of the Court will be chaired by journalists Amy Goodman and Ryan Grim.

Members of the DC session of the Court include: Marjorie Cohn, Professor of Law at Thomas Jefferson School of Law and former President of the National Lawyers Guild, Michael Sontheimer, journalist and historian (formerly Der Spiegel), Mark Feldstein, investigative correspondent and Professor of Journalism at the University of Maryland, Trevor Timm, co-founder of the Freedom of the Press Foundation, John Kiriakou, former CIA intelligence officer, Rebecca Vincent, Reporters Without Borders, Ewen MacAskill, journalist and intelligence correspondent (formerly Guardian), Ben Wizner, lawyer and ACLU civil liberties advocate, Maja Sever, president of the European Federation of Journalists (EFJ), Ece Temelkuran, writer, Lina Attalah, co-founder and editor-in-chief of Mada Masr, recipient of the 2020 Knight International Journalism Award, Sevim Dagdelen, member of the German Bundestag, Abby Martin, journalist.

The Tribunal's partners include Progressive International, Wau Holland Stiftung, Democracy Now!, The Nation, The Intercept, the European Federation of Journalists, the Press Freedom Foundation, Reporters Without Borders, Pen International, Courage, Defending Rights and Dissent and the Committee to Protect Journalists.

Tribunal co-founder Srećko Horvat said: "Pressure is mounting on the Biden administration to release Julian Assange. Not one man's life is at stake, but the First Amendment and freedom of the press itself. As long as the Espionage Act is enforced to imprison those who expose war crimes, no editor or journalist will be safe. It is time to set the truth free.

"The Belmarsh Court convenes in Washington to present evidence of this chilling threat and to unite lawmakers on Capitol Hill in a strong defense of the First Amendment and the basic right of all people to know what their governments are doing in their name."

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