

Julian Assange is free!

Wikileaks founder freed from prison in the UK



London, June 24 (RHC)-- WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been freed from prison in the United Kingdom and is on his way home to Australia after agreeing to plead guilty to a single charge of breaching the espionage law in the United States.

The 52-year-old Australian will reportedly plead guilty to one count of conspiring to obtain and disclose classified U.S. national defence documents, according to a filing in the U.S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

He was freed from the UK's high-security Belmarsh prison on Monday and taken to the airport where he flew out of the country. Assange will appear at a court in Saipan, a U.S. Pacific territory at 9 a.m. on Wednesday (23:00 GMT on Tuesday) where he will be sentenced to 62 months of time already served.

"Julian Assange is free," Wikileaks said in a statement posted on X.

“He left Belmarsh maximum security prison on the morning of 24 June, after having spent 1901 days there. He was granted bail by the High Court in London and was released at Stanstead airport during the afternoon, where he boarded a plane and departed the UK.”

“Julian is free!!!!” wife Stella wrote on X. “Words cannot express our immense gratitude to YOU – yes, YOU, who have all mobilised for years and years to make this come true. THANK YOU. THANK YOU, THANK YOU.”

Julian Assange rose to prominence with the launch of Wikileaks in 2006, creating an online whistleblower platform for people to submit classified material such as documents and videos anonymously.

Footage of a U.S. Apache helicopter attack in Baghdad, which killed a dozen people -- including two journalists with Reuters news agency -- raised the platform's profile, while the 2010 release of hundreds of thousands of classified U.S. documents on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as a trove of diplomatic cables, cemented its reputation.

Wikileaks published material about many countries, but it was the United States, during the administration of former U.S. President Donald Trump, that decided to charge him in 2019 with 17 counts of breaching the Espionage Act.

U.S. government lawyers had argued he conspired with Chelsea Manning, a former army intelligence analyst, who spent seven years in prison for leaking material to WikiLeaks. She was freed when U.S. President Barack Obama commuted her sentence in 2017.

The charges sparked outrage, with Assange's supporters arguing that, as the publisher and editor-in-chief of Wikileaks, he should not have faced charges usually used against government employees who steal or leak information.

Press freedom advocates, meanwhile, argued that criminally charging Assange was a threat to free speech.

“WikiLeaks published groundbreaking stories of government corruption and human rights abuses, holding the powerful accountable for their actions,” Wikileaks said in its statement announcing the plea deal.

“As editor-in-chief, Julian paid severely for these principles, and for the people's right to know. As he returns to Australia, we thank all who stood by us, fought for us, and remained utterly committed in the fight for his freedom.”



U.S. Department of Justice

National Security Division

CR - 24 - 00014

Washington, D.C. 20530

June 24, 2024 (EST)

The Honorable Ramona V. Manglona
U. S. District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands
P.O. Box 500687
Saipan, MP 96950
SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

FILED
Clerk
District Court

JUN 25 2024

for the Northern Mariana Islands
By JP
(Deputy Clerk)

Re: United States v. Julian Paul Assange

Your Honor:

We are attaching the electronically signed felony Information in the above-captioned matter and respectfully request that, as soon as possible, the clerk docket this letter and Information in order to provide public notice of the Rule 11 hearing scheduled before Your Honor in Saipan for Wednesday, June 26, 2024 at 9am, during which we anticipate that the defendant will plead guilty to the charge in the Information of conspiring to unlawfully obtain and disseminate classified information relating to the national defense of the United States, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 793(g), and be sentenced by the Court for that offense.

We appreciate the Court accommodating these plea and sentencing proceedings on a single day at the joint request of the parties, in light of the defendant's opposition to traveling to the continental United States to enter his guilty plea and the proximity of this federal U.S. District Court to the defendant's country of citizenship, Australia, to which we expect he will return at the conclusion of the proceedings.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew J. McKenzie
Deputy Chief
Counterintelligence and Export Control Section
U.S. Department of Justice
National Security Division

Shawn N. Anderson
United States Attorney
Districts of Guam and the NMI

Cc: Defense counsel (via email)

The filing from the U.S. Department of Justice describing the plea deal [US Department of Justice via Reuters]

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/358258-julian-assange-is-free-wikileaks-founder-freed-from-prison-in-the-uk>



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