

Former U.S. representative says persecution of Julian Assange was one of the biggest attacks on freedom of the press

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Washington, July 1 (RHC)-- Former Representative Tulsi Gabbard (Hawaii) defended WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange after he was released from prison, calling his charges "one of the biggest attacks on freedom of the press."

"His prosecution, the charges against him, are one of the biggest attacks on freedom of the press that we've seen and freedom of speech," Gabbard said on "Real Time with Bill Maher."

Assange was released from British prison on June 24th, after agreeing to plead guilty to one felony count under the Espionage Act for publishing classified U.S. military information in 2010. As editor-in-chief of Wikileaks, he published war logs from American efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, which were leaked by former Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning -- proving the war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the United States.

At the time, then-Vice President Biden called Assange a “terrorist.”

Gabbard served in the Hawaii Army National Guard from 2003 to 2020, even touring in Iraq, before jumping into the Democratic primary race for the White House. The former lawmaker continues to serve in the California-based Army Reserve.

Tulsi Gabbard left the Democratic party after retiring from Congress in 2021, becoming independent, and endorsed a slew of Republicans during the 2022 midterms. The Democrat-turned-independent has also risen as a vocal supporter of former President Donald Trump.

In May, she said she “would be honored” to serve Trump’s running mate, as her name made its way up the veepstakes list, though many see her as a long-shot pick. Maher voiced his surprise at Gabbard’s answer, saying that he thought she would “go the other way” on the issue.

“We have to think of our security first,” Maher argued. “I don’t like a guy who pretends that he’s a patriot when it’s the spies out there who are protecting this country.”

In response, Gabbard doubled down on her defense of Assange.

“What he exposed really is how our own government was violating our own civil liberties and trying to cover up things that were very embarrassing to our government,” she said. “I think that’s the essence of the responsibility of a free press.”

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