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Dear Secretary-General,

Faced with a world in turmoil and a thousand challenges on your desk, we as former Assistant Secretaries-General feel an urgent and moral need to bring to your attention the plight of Mr Julian Assange. This is a man who has served his fellow human beings with exceptional courage via his publication of Wiki-leaks. Almost singlehanded he has exposed the war crimes, the human rights violations and other actions that violate the word and spirit of the UN Charter and everything the UN represents.

He is currently a victim of British injustice in Belmarsh High Security prison in London, awaiting extradition to the USA where he may be sentenced to 175 years for no more than meeting his obligations as a journalist and publisher. The implications for free journalism everywhere are deeply disturbing. Who will be next?

We believe that Julian Assange deserves your intervention with the British Government. The UN Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, reported that Assange has been subjected to a "clear pattern of psychological torture and is facing the danger of permanent damage". We know the advice of a UNHRC Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has called for freedom for Mr. Assange which was rejected by the British authorities without explanation. Your involvement can change that.

In addition, we understand that the Swiss Canton de Genève has made an extraordinary offer to give Mr Assange a 'humanitarian visa' for his safe passage from England to Switzerland. If the British Government agree, this would save Mr. Assange's life and perhaps persuade the US Department of Justice, which will soon be under new presidential authority, to drop its misplaced charges of 'espionage' against a journalist and publisher for no more than exercising his rights under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We accept that our request for your intervention is extraordinary, but this is indeed an extraordinary case for which the UN should stand up, we believe. There is no doubt in our minds your approach to the British Government would have the support of a majority of the member states in the General Assembly and, in the eyes of millions of people, add authority to the status of the UN.

With our best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Denis J. Halliday
Former Assistant Secretary-General

Hans-C. von Sponeck
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