

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you as former Attorneys-General and Ministers for Justice about the on-going plight of Australian citizen Julian Assange.

We believe that it is incumbent upon us, as former chief law officers and ministers with responsibility for the justice system within our various jurisdictions, to urge you and your Government to renew your endeavours to ensure our closest ally, the United States, ends its pursuit of Mr Assange so he can be released from Belmarsh prison and returned home to Australia. Whatever one's view of his actions, he has not been a free man for eleven years and has arguably more than served his time, if he ever even had a case to answer.

As you would be aware, Australian journalists in recent times have been rightly lauded for their work in exposing allegations of war crimes committed by Australian troops in Afghanistan. In stark contrast, Julian Assange has been detained for over four years in London's Belmarsh prison, on top of his effective imprisonment in the Embassy of Ecuador in London for seven years, because the US wants to extradite him to face charges which relate to the publication of details of US war crimes in both Afghanistan and Iraq.

We believe that the treatment of Julian Assange, as opposed to Australian journalists, is deeply troubling given that in both cases the right of the public to know about war crimes, whenever and wherever they are committed, is crucial.

In Australia we, quite rightly, condemn countries such as China, which seek to prosecute individuals who are not living in that country for exposing breaches of human rights or corruption. Despite this, the United States is applying extra-territorial reach by charging Assange, who is not a US citizen and did not commit alleged crimes in the US, under its Espionage Act. We believe that this sets a very dangerous precedent and has the potential to put at risk anyone, anywhere in the world, who publishes information that the US unilaterally deems to be classified for security reasons. This action should be of real concern to the Government because of its impact on journalists and whistle-blowers.

In relation to the on-going incarceration of Mr Assange, we say enough is enough and we look to you and your government to do all you can to satisfactorily resolve this matter quickly. As you have rightly said, both as Opposition leader and Prime minister, the Assange case must be brought to an end.

We have forwarded a copy of this correspondence to the Federal Attorney-General, the Honourable Mark Dreyfus KC.

Yours sincerely



Rob Hulls



Peter Duncan



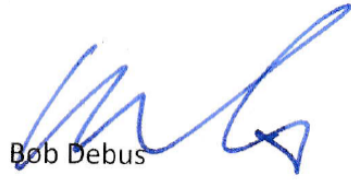
Lara Giddings




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