

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 8, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As Members of Congress deeply committed to the principles of free speech and freedom of the press, we write to strongly encourage your Administration to withdraw the U.S. extradition request currently pending against Australian publisher Julian Assange and halt all prosecutorial proceedings against him as soon as possible.

Mr. Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, faces multiple charges under the Espionage Act due to his role in publishing classified documents about the U.S. State Department, Guantanamo Bay, and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. He has been detained on remand in London since 2019 and is pending extradition to the U.S., having lost his appeal of the extradition order in the courts of the United Kingdom.

Deep concerns about this case have been repeatedly expressed by international media outlets, human rights and press freedom advocates, and Members of Congress, among others. To cite only a few of the commentaries, in November 2022, *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *Le Monde*, *DER SPEIGEL* and *El País* [came together to express their grave concerns](#) about the continued prosecution of Julian Assange for obtaining and publishing classified materials, arguing that “publishing is not a crime.” In December 2022, a coalition of press freedom, civil liberties, and international human rights organizations [wrote to Attorney General Merrick Garland](#) urging him to correct course and abandon the relentless pursuit of Mr. Assange in order to protect the ability of journalists to report freely on the United States without fear of retribution. U.S. elected officials have previously called on the Administration to drop the charges against Mr. Assange, including in April of this year when [Members of the House argued](#) that “[e]very day that the prosecution of Julian Assange continues is another day that our own government needlessly undermines our own moral authority abroad and rolls back the freedom of the press under the First Amendment at home.”

We believe the Department of Justice acted correctly in 2013, during your vice-presidency, when it [declined to pursue charges](#) against Mr. Assange for publishing the classified documents because it recognized that the prosecution would set a dangerous precedent. We note that the 1917 Espionage Act was ostensibly intended to punish and imprison government employees and contractors for providing or selling state secrets to enemy governments, not to punish journalists and whistleblowers for attempting to inform the public about serious issues that some U.S. government officials might prefer to keep secret. We are aware that the Assange

case has been [cited by officials of the People's Republic of China](#) to claim that the U.S. is “hypocritical” when it comes to its purported support for media freedom. We are also well aware that should the U.S. extradition and prosecution go forward, there is a significant risk that our [bilateral relationship with Australia will be badly damaged](#).

It is the duty of journalists to seek out sources, including documentary evidence, in order to report to the public on the activities of government. The United States must not pursue an unnecessary prosecution that risks criminalizing common journalistic practices and thus chilling the work of the free press. We urge you to ensure that this case be brought to a close in as timely a manner as possible.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Thomas Massie
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Eric Burlison
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



Marjorie Taylor Greene
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Matthew Rosendale, Sr.
Member of Congress



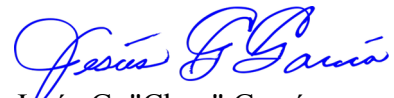
Greg Casar
Member of Congress



Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/

Rand Paul
United States Senator

Cc: Attorney General Merrick Garland
Secretary of State Antony Blinken