

Those who work in the U.S. Department of Justice seeking Julian's extradition are the puppets, not the puppet masters. They are the facade, the fiction. The longstanding persecution of Julian Assange has nothing to do with justice. Like the High Court in London, the U.S. Department of Justice is engaged in an elaborate judicial pantomime. They debate arcane legal nuances to distract from the Dickensian farce where a man who has not committed a crime, who is not a U.S. citizen, can be extradited under the Espionage Act and sentenced to life in prison for the most courageous and consequential journalism of our generation. The engine driving the lynching of Julian is not found in the judicial systems in Britain or the United States. It is found in Langley, Virginia at the Central Intelligence Agency. The persecution of Julian is driven by the secretive inner state, one where we do not count, one obsessed with the mad pursuit of empire, ruthless exploitation and total control.

Because this modern Leviathan was exposed by Julian and WikiLeaks it demands revenge. The U.S., like most industrial nations, has undergone a corporate coup d'état in slow motion. It is no longer a functioning democracy. The real centers of power are the corporate, military, and national security sectors. These centers of power were humiliated and embarrassed by WikiLeaks. Their war crimes, lies, conspiracies to crush the democratic aspirations of the vulnerable and the poor, and rampant corruption were laid bare in troves of leaked documents.

We cannot fight on behalf of Julian unless we are clear about who we are fighting against. It is far worse than corrupt judiciaries. The global billionaire class, who have orchestrated a social inequality rivaled by pharaonic Egypt, has internally seized all of the levers of power and made us the most spied upon, monitored, watched, and photographed population in human history. When the government watches you 24 hours a day you cannot use the word liberty. This is the relationship between a master and a slave.

Julian was long a target, of course. But when WikiLeaks published the documents known as Vault 7 which exposed the hacking tools the CIA uses to monitor our phones, televisions, and even cars, he and journalism itself were condemned to crucifixion. The object is to shut down any investigation into the inner workings of power that might hold the ruling class accountable, eradicate all public debate and replace it with the cant fed to the mob.

I spent two decades as a foreign correspondent on the outer reaches of empire in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and the Balkans. I am acutely aware of the savagery of empire, how the brutal tools of repression are first tested on those Frantz Fanon called the wretched of the earth. Wholesale surveillance, torture, coups, black sites, black propaganda, militarized police, militarized drones, assassinations, wars.

But as Thucydides pointed out about the Athenian empire, the tyranny Athens imposed on others it finally imposed on itself.

Once our tools of repression are perfected on people of color overseas, a specialty of the apartheid state of Israel, these tools migrate back to the homeland. By hollowing out countries from the inside through deindustrialization, austerity, deregulation, wage stagnation, the abolition of unions, massive expenditures on war and intelligence, a refusal to address the

climate emergency, and a virtual tax boycott for the richest individuals and corporations, these predators intend to keep us in bondage, victims of a corporate neo-feudalism.

They have perfected their instruments of Orwellian control.

From its inception the CIA carried out assassinations, coups, torture, and illegal spying and abuse, including on that of U.S. citizens, activities exposed in 1975 by the Church Committee hearings in the Senate and the Pike Committee hearings in the House. All these crimes, especially after the attacks of 9/11, have returned with a vengeance. The CIA is a rogue and unaccountable paramilitary organization. It has its own armed units and drone program, death squads, and a vast archipelago of secret global black sites where victims are tortured and disappeared.

The U.S. allocates a black budget of at least \$50 billion a year to hide multiple types of clandestine projects carried out by the National Security Agency, the CIA, and other intelligence agencies, usually beyond the scrutiny of Congress. The CIA has a well-oiled apparatus to kidnap, torture, and assassinate targets around the globe, which is why, since it had already set up a system of 24-hour video surveillance of Julian and the Ecuadoran Embassy in London, it quite naturally discussed kidnapping and assassinating him. That is its business.

Senator Frank Church, after examining the heavily redacted CIA documents released to his committee, defined the CIA's covert activity, and I quote, as "a semantic disguise for murder, coercion, blackmail, bribery, the spreading of lies, and consorting with known torturers and international terrorists."

All despotisms mask state persecution with sham court proceedings. The show trials and troikas in Stalin's Soviet Union. The raving Nazi judges in fascist Germany. The denunciation rallies in Mao's China. State crime is always cloaked in a faux legality -- judicial farce.

If Julian is extradited and sentenced, and given the Lubyanka-like proclivities of the Eastern District of Virginia this is a near certainty, it means that those of us who have published classified material, as I did when I worked for the *New York Times*, will become criminals. It means that the iron curtain will be pulled down to mask the abuses of power. It means that the state, which through special administrative measures, or SAMs, anti-terrorism laws, and the Espionage Act have created our homegrown version of Stalin's Article 58, can imprison anyone of any nationality anywhere in the world who dares commit the crime of telling the truth.

We are here today to fight for Julian, but we are also here to fight against powerful subterranean forces that, in demanding Julian's extradition and life imprisonment, have declared war on freedom, especially freedom of the press.

We are here today to fight for Julian, but we are also here to fight for the restoration of the rule of law and democracy.

We are here today to fight for Julian, but we are also here to dismantle the wholesale Stasi-like state surveillance erected across the West.

We are here today for Julian, but we are also here to overthrow - and let me repeat that word for the benefit of those in security services who have come here today to monitor us – overthrow the corporate state and create a government of the people by the people and for the people that will cherish, rather than persecute, the best among us.