

Received 16/2/24.



Australian Embassy and Permanent Mission to the UN
To the personal attention of
Att. H.E. Ambassador Mr. Ian David Grainge Biggs
The Icon
Gertrude-Froehlich-Sandner-Strasse 2
1100 Vienna

Vienna, 16 February 2024

Subject: Open letter regarding Mr. Julian Assange – a matter of life and death!

Your Excellency,

We are writing to you in relation to the hearing at the High Courts of Justice on 20 and 21 February 2024, where two judges will decide on Mr. Assange's right to appeal. We, concerned citizens from Austria, firmly believe in democratic principles, the rule of law, human rights, freedom of information, free speech, and a free press.

We, the undersigned, represent the Austrian Journalists Club, the biggest independent journalist association and communication platform for media-people in Austria. Since its foundation in 1977, the Austrian Journalist Club holds high the right of the freedom of the press and the right of true information for everybody, free of political or economic influences whatsoever. Undersigning with us are also representatives of Candles4Assange, a group in Vienna holding weekly vigils for Julian Assange's freedom since January 9, 2020. We share the concern that his prosecution sets a dangerous precedent of extra-territoriality that jeopardizes journalists and publishers globally.

Mr. Assange's work with WikiLeaks has undoubtedly contributed to public awareness of not only government and military actions and of potential misconduct, but also to shedding light on other matters of global significance, and holding power to account.

Many Australians voted for Mr. Albanese, your Prime Minister, because of his campaign to free the Australian citizen Mr. Julian Assange. After the elections, and, notwithstanding his statement "Enough-is-enough", all of a sudden, he did not believe in "loudspeaker"-diplomacy and, according to various statements, he is apparently acting behind the scenes in his negotiations with the US. From our perspective, Julian Assange is a political prisoner who is a thorn in the eyes of those in power (be it in politics, intelligence circles, finance, corporations, etc.) because WikiLeaks published and divulged crimes and corruption worldwide, as well as alleged war crimes of the United States. You well know that your citizen, Mr. Julian Assange, is at risk if his appeal fails (please refer to the results of the investigation by the then UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer to be found also in his book: The Trial of Julian Assange).

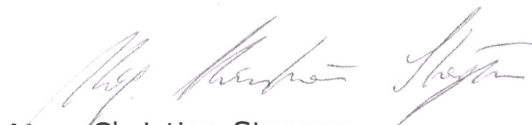
So far, whenever questions were raised with government representatives, including Australia, the bland response has always been a firm belief in the judicial

system of the UK and the US. Please do not smokescreen us with such a statement about no interfering with the legal processes. Apart from Nils Melzer's book, we would also refer you to the two letters we addressed to the then UK Home Secretary on 30 March 2022, followed by one dated 20 April 2022, to the then UK Prime Minister (copies attached for easy reference) to request that Mr. Assange be freed and not extradited. Both letters contain but a sample of observations of the proceedings throughout the last four years which have too often left us utterly appalled. We have also noted the decision taken by Judge Swift not to allow Mr. Assange's appeals with great horror. We are not aware of any protest raised by the Australian Government which has intervened in other cases to return their "accused" citizens to Australia.

We are still hopeful that on 20 and 21 February 2024, the two judges will nonetheless lead the matter to a fair conclusion and allow both appeals. There could however only be one possible outcome to the entire matter which would reinstate our trust: A stop to all types of persecution, no extradition to the US and a return of Julian Assange to Australia, his home country!

In conclusion, we would like to thank you for the opportunity of this meeting to deliver our letter and request you to kindly convey it to the Prime Minister for him to walk the talk and to undertake any urgent action necessary with both the UK and the US administrations.

Yours faithfully,



Mag. Christian Stoeger
Vice-President Austrian Journalists Club
on behalf of the Austrian Journalists Club



Marie-Odile Dorer
on behalf of Candles4Assange Vienna

This open letter is also signed by:

Werner Brix, Actor

Gerhard Ehegartner, Teacher and author

Gerhard Fischer, Common Good Lobby

Ing. Mag. Ludwig Fliesser, Communication manager, social anthropologist

Marc Friedrich, Financial expert and bestselling author

Dr. Daniele Ganser, Historian and peace researcher

Ao. Univ. Prof. Dr. Fritz Hausjell, President "Reporters without Borders" Austria

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Mag. Ortwin Rosner, Philosopher and germanist
Mag.^a Renata Schmidtkunz, Journalist ORF/OE1
Martin Steiner, MA, Journalist
P.A. Straubinger, Journalist ORF OE3, film-maker, speaker, author
Mag. Liza Ulitzka, Investigative journalist, writer and publisher
Dr. Gudula Walterskirchen, Historian, journalist and author
Mag. Christian Wehrschütz, Foreign correspondent ORF
Dr. Marion Wisinger, Vice-President PEN-Club Austria

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