

To the personal attention of
Dr. Volker Türk
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
Office of the United Nations
High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10
Switzerland

Vienna, 16 February 2024

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

Your Excellency,

We are reaching out to you regarding the imminent hearing at the High Courts of Justice in London on 20 and 21 February 2024 to determine Mr. Assange's right to appeal. As concerned citizens from Austria, we advocate for democratic principles, the rule of law, human rights, freedom of information, free speech and for 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 is a potential threat to global journalism and publishing.

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 (be they by individuals, corporations or governments and their various sections), and holding power to account. His prolonged imprisonment, exceeding 13 years, raises serious concerns about human rights violations.

In 2016, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention called for Mr. Assange's release, including his entitlement to compensation. Despite this, he remained under various forms of detention until now when he is facing extradition to the United States.

The extradition trial, labelled by many as a "show trial", and the procedures that followed, overlooked crucial evidence, including perjury by a key witness and CIA plots against Mr. Assange's life. The decision to extradite him, based on assurances from the US, disregarded the potential dangers he faces, both in pre-trial procedures and within the US legal system.

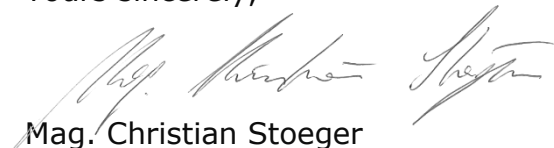
Notably, former UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Nils Melzer, concluded that Mr. Assange is a victim of torture and should be set free. We have also noted that Dr. Alice Jill Edwards, the current UN Special Rapporteur on Torture urged the Government of the United Kingdom on 6 February to halt the possible extradition of Julian Assange to the United States.

As the hearing approaches, we urge your intervention to address the following human rights concerns:

1. Disregard of the decision of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.
2. Prolonged imprisonment in the high-security Prison of Belmarsh.
3. Judiciary decisions seemingly influenced by political motives.

We appeal for a fair resolution on 20 and 21 February 2024 and, ultimately a dismissal of the case, no extradition to the US, and the return of Julian Assange to his home country, Australia, and a cessation of all types of persecution. Thank you for your kind attention to this critical matter.

Yours sincerely,



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



Marie-Odile Dorer
on behalf of Candles4Assange

CC: Dr. Alice Jill Edwards, Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

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
Daphne Hruby, BA, Journalist, ORF/OE1
Dr. Maria Hubmer-Mogg, Doctor
Michael Karjalainen-Dräger, Editor-in-chief "Idealism Prevails"
Sarah Kleiner, BA, Journalist
Thomas Lohninger, Executive director epicenter.works
Mag. Daniela Lupp, Sociologist and editor-in-chief "Zeitenwende"
Dr. Angelika Mayrhofer-Battlogg, Cultural and social scientist, editor
Dr. Alexander Mejstrik, Historian and editor



Univ.-Prof. Dr. Manfred Nowak, Secretary General of the Global Campus of Human Rights; Wiener Forum für Demokratie und Menschenrechte
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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Österreichischer PEN-Club
Reporter ohne Grenzen, Österreich (Reporters Without Borders, Austria)
„Unsere ZeitenWende“ Online Magazine
Wiener Forum für Demokratie und Menschenrechte