

Julian Assange – Nobel Prize?

Mairead Maguire



The author and Betty Williams were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 for building a movement called the 'Peace People' that would play a part in helping to move the communities of Northern Ireland towards a peace process and, eventually, the Good Friday Agreement of 1998. Now, Mairead has requested permission from the UK Home Office to visit her friend Julian Assange in prison. She has nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize.

I want to visit Julian to see he is receiving medical care and to let him know that there are many people around the world who admire him and are grateful for his courage in trying to stop the wars and end the suffering of others.

Thursday 11th April 2019 will go down in history as a dark day for the rights of humanity when Julian Assange, a brave and good man, was arrested by the British Metropolitan Police, forcibly removed without prior warning, in a style befitting a war criminal, from the Ecuadorian Embassy, and bundled into a police van. It is a sad time when the UK Government, at the behest of the United States Government, arrested Julian Assange, a symbol of freedom of speech as the publisher of Wikileaks. The world's leaders and mainstream media remain silent on the fact that he is an innocent man until proven guilty, while the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention defines him as innocent. The decision of President Lenin Moreno of Ecuador who, under financial pressure from the United States, has withdrawn asylum to the Wikileaks founder, is a further example of the US's global currency monopoly, pressurizing other countries to do their bidding or face the financial and possibly violent consequences for disobedience to the alleged world Super Power, which has sadly lost its moral compass.

Julian Assange had taken asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy seven years ago precisely because he foresaw that the US would demand his extradition to face a Grand Jury for mass murders carried out not by him but by US and NATO forces, and concealed from the public.

Unfortunately, it is my belief that Julian Assange will not see a fair trial. As we have seen over the last seven years, time and time again, the European countries and many others do not have the political will or clout to stand up for what they know is right, and will eventually cave into the United States' will. We have watched Chelsea Manning being returned to jail and to solitary confinement, so we must not be naive in our thinking: surely, this is the future for Julian Assange.

I visited Julian on two occasions in the Ecuadorian Embassy and was very impressed with this courageous and highly intelligent man. The first visit was on my return from Kabul, where young Afghan teenage boys insisted on writing a letter with the request I carry it to Julian Assange, to thank him for publishing on Wikileaks the truth about the war in Afghanistan and to help stop their homeland being bombed by planes and drones. All had a story of brothers or friends killed by drones while collecting wood in winter on the mountains.

On 8 January 2019, I nominated Julian Assange for the Nobel Peace Prize. I issued a press release hoping to bring attention to his nomination, which seemed to have been widely ignored by Western media. By Julian's courageous actions, and others like him, we could see full well the atrocities of war. The release of the files brought to our doors the atrocities our governments carried out. It is my strong belief that this is the true essence of an activist and it is my great shame I live in an era when people like Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, Chelsea Manning and anyone willing to open our eyes to the atrocities of war is likely to be hunted like an animal by governments, punished and silenced. Therefore, I believe the British government should oppose the extradition of Assange as it sets a dangerous precedent for journalists, whistleblowers and other sources of truth the US may wish to pressure in the future. This man is paying a high price to end war and for peace and non-violence, and we should all remember that.

* * *

Julian Assange has been awarded the 2019 European United Left-Nordic Green Left Award for Journalists, Whistleblowers and Defenders of the Right to Information, WikiLeaks reported in April.

The award is given to individuals 'uncovering the truth and exposing it to the public' and to honour 'individuals or groups who have been intimidated and/or persecuted' for such actions. It thus recognizes Assange's work through WikiLeaks.

The prize is sponsored by European left-wing parliamentarians, who

devised it in 2018 in honour of assassinated Maltese journalist **Daphne Galizia**. Nobel Peace prize winner (1976), **Mairead Maguire**, received it on Assange's behalf at an event in the European Parliament in Strasbourg.

Assange is a prize winning journalist with more than 15 international awards for his work, including the 2008 New Media Award from *The Economist*, 2010 *Time* Person of the Year (Readers' Choice), and the 2009 Amnesty International UK Media Award. His defence lawyers have repeatedly explained that, by being a publisher and journalist, US imprisonment would mean the violation of his fundamental right to freedom of expression.

'The warning is explicit towards journalists. What happened to the founder and editor of WikiLeaks can happen to you in a newspaper, you in a TV studio, you on the radio, you running a podcast,' said award-winning journalist **John Pilger**, writing an op-ed for teleSUR.

On 11 April 2019, Assange's seven-year asylum was abruptly removed and he was arrested by British police. Immediately, the US charged him with a 'computer hacking conspiracy', over an allegation he conspired with former army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to break into a classified government computer.

www.peacepeople.com

