

Predictable monstrosity: UK approves Assange extradition

By Binoy Kampmark

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Julian Assange's fate is currently in the hands of the U.S. State
(image via YouTube)

The only shock about the UK Home Secretary Priti Patel's decision regarding Julian Assange was that it did not come sooner.

In April, Chief Magistrate Senior District Judge Paul Goldspring expressed the view that he was ['duty-bound'](#) to send the case to [Priti Patel](#) to decide on whether to extradite the WikiLeaks founder to the United States to face 18 charges, 17 grafted from the U.S. [Espionage Act of 1917](#).

Patel, for her part, was never exercised by the more sordid details of the case. Her approach to matters of justice is one of premature adjudication: the guilty are everywhere and only multiply. When it came to [WikiLeaks](#), such fine points of law and fact as a shaky indictment based on fabricated evidence, meditations on assassination, and a genuine, diagnosed risk of self-harm were piffling distractions.

The U.S. Department of Justice would not be denied.

'Under the Extradition Act 2003,' a nameless spokesman for the Home Office [stated](#), 'the Secretary of State must sign an extradition order if there are no grounds to prohibit the order being made. Extradition requests are only sent to the Home Secretary once a judge decides it can proceed after considering various aspects of the case.'

Evidently, overt politicisation, bad faith, and flimsy reassurances from the U.S. Department of Justice on how Assange will be detained, do not constitute sufficient grounds.

But the cue came from the courts themselves, which have done a fabulous job of covering the U.S. justice system with tinsel in actually believing assurances that Assange would not be facing special administrative detention measures (SAMs) or permanent captivity in the [ADX Florence supermax](#) in Colorado.

The statement read:

'In this case, the UK courts have not found that it would be oppressive, unjust or an abuse of process to extradite Mr Assange.'

In such a scatterbrained and amoral cosmos that marks decision-making in the Home Office, no mention has been made of the surveillance operation against the publisher in the [Ecuadorian embassy](#), orchestrated at the behest of the Central Intelligence Agency ([CIA](#)). None, either, of

contemplated abduction or assassination, or the frail mental health Assange finds himself.

As late as 10 June, [a letter](#) from the group Doctors for Assange, comprising 300 doctors, psychiatrists and psychologists, noted that the Home Secretary's *'denial of the cruel, inhuman treatment inflicted upon Assange was then, and is even more so now, irreconcilable with the reality of the situation'*.

In April, an umbrella grouping of 19 organisations dedicated to press freedom and free speech [urged](#) Patel, in reviewing the case, to appreciate that Assange would "highly likely" face isolation or solitary confinement in the U.S. *'despite the U.S. Government's assurances, which would severely exacerbate the risk of suicide'*.

The co-chairs of the Courage Foundation's [Assange Defense Committee](#), Noam Chomsky, Daniel Ellsberg and Alice Walker, reflected on the depravity of the order in a [statement](#).

They wrote:

'It is a sad day for western democracy. The UK's decision to extradite Julian Assange to the nation that plotted to assassinate him – the nation that wants to imprison him for 175 years for publishing truthful information in the public interest – is an abomination.'

As for the UK, it had:

'... shown its complicity in this farce, by agreeing to extradite a foreigner based on politically motivated charges that collapse under the slightest scrutiny.'

[Amnesty International](#) expressed similar views, as did [Reporters Without Borders](#). There was even concern from Conservative MP David Davis, who [expressed his belief](#) that Assange would not "get a fair trial." The extradition law was, as matters stood, lopsided in favour of U.S. citizens.

All this is consistent with Patel, who seems to relish

the prospect of sending individuals to a place where human rights are marginal jottings on a policy paper. The [UK-Rwanda Migration and Economic Partnership](#), as it is euphemistically termed, is her pride and joy, albeit one currently facing strenuous legal opposition.

Under the arrangement, individuals crossing the channel will receive one-way tickets to Rwanda to have their claims processed without the prospect of settling in the UK. The Rwandan Government, hostile to contrarians, the rule of law and refugees, will be subsidised for their pain and labour.

To this sadistic streak can be added her admiration for the *Espionage Act* being used to prosecute Assange. This fact should have disqualified her in any country operating under the rule of law. Even as Prime Minister Boris Johnson faced a Conservative no-confidence vote this month, Patel's [National Security Bill](#) passed its second reading in Parliament.

The bill articulates an offence of *'obtaining or disclosing protected information'* that includes *'any information... which either is, or could reasonably be expected to be, subject to any type of restrictions of access for protecting the safety and interests of the UK'*.

In a polite nod of deference to U.S. law, the [proposed law](#) states that an offence is committed when a person *'obtains, copies, records or retains protected information, or discloses or provides access to protected information'* for a purpose *'that they know, or ought reasonably to know, is prejudicial to the safety or interests of the United Kingdom'* and if *'the foreign power condition is met'*.

The requirement is that the act is *'carried out for or on behalf of a foreign power'*, including instances where *'an indirect relationship'* exists.

Assange has 14 days to appeal this insidious rubber-stamping of judicially sanctioned brutality. His legal team are hoping to use the High Court as the route to highlight the political

dimension of the case and draw attention back to the way the extradition law was read.

If the defence fails, Assange will be sent across the Atlantic, entrusted to officials, some of whom considered murdering him, to be made an example of.

It will be the clarion call to regimes across the world that punishing a publisher is something supposed liberal democracies can do as well, and as deviously, as anybody else.

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