



MEDIA RELEASE

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Dropping the charges the only clear path to freedom for Assange

The United States government must drop its prosecution of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and bring its bid to extradite him to an end, says the union for Australian journalists.

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance welcomes the decision by the United Kingdom High Court to conditionally grant Assange leave to appeal against the 2022 extradition order.

But it is disappointing that leave to appeal could still be refused if satisfactory “assurances” are provided by the US government about how Assange would be treated in the US legal system.

“Julian Assange’s bid to overturn the extradition order is still alive but his legal limbo continues,” said MEAA Media Federal President Karen Percy.

“We remain concerned that there is still no certainty an appeal against his extradition will proceed, and even if it goes ahead that only a small number of grounds of appeal are possible.

“Julian Assange needs more than assurances from the US about how he will be treated. The only clear path to freedom is for the US to drop the charges, end its prosecution and allow him to be released from jail.

“Next month will mark five years of detention in Belmarsh Prison, where his health and mental wellbeing has worsened recently.

“Media freedom continues to be imperilled the longer this case drags on.

“The stories published by WikiLeaks and other outlets more than a decade ago were clearly in the public interest. The ongoing prosecution is politically motivated with the intent of curtailing free speech, criminalising journalism and sending a clear message to future whistleblowers and publishers that they too will be punished if they step out of line.

“If the US government can extradite a citizen of another country, from anywhere in the world for publishing factual information it sets a dangerous precedent that will have a profoundly chilling effect on investigative journalism, discouraging journalists and whistleblowers from exposing vital information in the public interest.

“We call on the Australian government to keep up the pressure on the US to drop the charges so Julian Assange can resume life as a free man.”

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