

# The Assange Arrest: You Have the Right to Remain Silent

The arrest of Julian Assange was an act of revenge by the U.S. government that strikes at the heart of journalism, writes Pepe Escobar.

**By Pepe Escobar**

*Asia Times*



The date – April 11, 2019 – will live in infamy in the annals of Western “values” and “freedom of expression.” The image is stark. A handcuffed journalist and publisher dragged out by force from the inside of an embassy, clutching a [Gore Vidal book](#), the “History of the U.S. National Security State.”

The mechanism is brutal. WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange was arrested because the United States demanded this from the Tory British government, which for its part meekly claimed it did not pressure Ecuador to revoke Assange’s asylum.

The U.S. magically erases Ecuador’s financial troubles, ordering the IMF to release a providential [\\$4.2-billion loan](#). Immediately after, Ecuadorian diplomats “invite” the London Metropolitan Police to come inside their embassy to arrest their long-term guest.

Let’s cut to the chase. Julian Assange is not a U.S. citizen, he’s an Australian. WikiLeaks is not a U.S.-based media organization. If the US government gets Assange extradited, prosecuted and incarcerated, it will legitimize its right to go after anyone, anyhow, anywhere, anytime.

Call it The Killing of Journalism.

## Get Me That Password?

The case by the U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) against Assange is flimsy at best. Everything has to do essentially with the release of classified info in 2010 – 90,000 military files on Afghanistan, 400,000 files on Iraq and 250,000 diplomatic cables spanning most of the planet.

Assange is allegedly guilty of helping Chelsea Manning, the former U.S. Army intel analyst, to get these documents. But it gets trickier. He's also allegedly guilty of "encouraging" Manning to collect more information.

There's no other way to interpret that. This amounts, no holds barred, to all-out criminalization of journalistic practice.

For the moment, Assange is charged with "conspiracy to commit computer intrusion." The indictment argues that Assange helped Manning to crack a password stored on Pentagon computers linked to the Secret Internet Protocol Network (SIPRNet). [Though a closer look at the indictment shows the alleged help was to obscure Manning's identity and not intrude into a DOD computer.]

In March 2010 chat logs obtained by the U.S. government, Manning talks to someone alternatively named "0x" and "press association." The DoJ is convinced this interlocutor is Assange. But they must conclusively prove it.

Manning and this person, allegedly Assange, engaged in "discussions." "During an exchange, Manning told Assange that 'after this upload, that's all I really have got left.'

To which Assange replied: 'Curious eyes never run dry in my experience.'"

None of this holds up. U.S. corporate media routinely publishes illegal leaks of classified information. Manning offered the documents he had already downloaded to both *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*— and he was rejected. Only then did he approach WikiLeaks.

The allegation that Assange tried to help crack a computer password has been doing the rounds since 2010. The DoJ under Obama refused to go for it, aware of what it would mean in terms of potentially outlawing investigative journalism.

No wonder U.S. corporate media, deprived of a major scoop, subsequently started to dismiss WikiLeaks as a Russian agent.

### **The Nuclear Option**

The great Daniel "Pentagon Papers" Ellsberg had already warned back in 2017:

"Obama having opened the legal campaign against the press by going after the roots of investigative reporting on national security – the sources – Trump is going to go after the gatherers/gardeners themselves (and their bosses, publishers). To switch the metaphor, an indictment of Assange is a 'first use' of 'the nuclear option' against the First Amendment protection of a free press."

The current DoJ charges – basically stealing a computer password – are just the tip of the avalanche. At least for now, publishing is not a crime. Yet if extradited, Assange

may be additionally charged with extra conspiracies and even violation of the 1917 Espionage Act.

Even if they must still seek consent from London to bring further charges, there's no shortage of DoJ lawyers able to apply sophistry to conjure a crime out of thin air.

Jennifer Robinson, Assange's very able lawyer, has correctly stressed his arrest is "a free speech issue" because it "is all about the ways in which journalists can communicate with their sources." The invaluable Ray McGovern, who knows one or two things about the U.S. intel community, has evoked a [requiem of the fourth estate](#).

The full context of Assange's arrest comes to light when examined as sequential to Chelsea Manning spending a month in solitary confinement in a Virginia jail for refusing to denounce Assange in front of a grand jury. There's no doubt the DoJ tactic is to break Manning by any means available.

Here's [Manning's legal team](#):

"The indictment against Julian Assange unsealed today was obtained a year to the day before Chelsea appeared before the grand jury and refused to give testimony. The fact that this indictment has existed for over a year underscores what Chelsea's legal team and Chelsea herself have been saying since she was first issued a subpoena to appear in front of a Federal Grand Jury in the Eastern District of Virginia – that compelling Chelsea to testify would have been duplicative of evidence already in the possession of the grand jury, and was not needed in order for U.S. Attorneys to obtain an indictment of Mr Assange."

## The Deep State Attacks

The ball is now in a UK court. Assange will most certainly linger in prison for a few months for skipping bail while the extradition to the U.S. dossier proceeds. The DoJ arguably has discussed with London how a “correct” judge may deliver the desired outcome.

Assange is a publisher. He leaked absolutely nothing. *The New York Times*, as well as *The Guardian*, also published what Manning uncovered. [Collateral Murder](#), among tens of thousands of pieces of evidence, should always be at the forefront of the whole discussion – this is about war crimes committed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

So it’s no wonder the U.S. Deep State will never forgive Manning and Assange, even as *The New York Times*, in another glaring instance of double standards, may get a pass. The drama will eventually need closure at the Eastern District of Virginia because the national security and intel apparatus has been working on this screenplay, full-time, for years.

As CIA director, Mike Pompeo did cut to the chase: “It is time to call out WikiLeaks for what it really is: a non-state hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors like Russia.”

What amounts to a de facto declaration of war underlines how dangerous WikiLeaks actually is, just because it practiced investigative journalism.

The current DoJ charges have absolutely nothing to do with

the debunked Russia-gate. But expect the subsequent political football to be bombastic.

The Trump camp at the moment is divided. Assange is either a pop hero fighting the Deep State swamp or a lowly Kremlin stooge. At the same time, Joe Manchin, a southerner Democrat Senator, rejoices, on the record, as an ersatz 19th-century plantation owner, that Assange is now “our property.” The Democrat strategy will be to use Assange to get to Trump.

And then there’s the EU, of which Britain may eventually not be part of, later rather than sooner. The EU will be very vigilant on Assange being extradited to “Trump’s America,” as the Deep State makes sure that journalists everywhere actually do have a right, to always remain silent.

**Pepe Escobar, a veteran Brazilian journalist, is the correspondent-at-large for Hong Kong-based Asia Times. His latest book is “2030.” Follow him on Facebook.**

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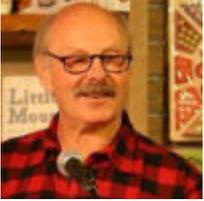
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## Assange’s Lynch Mob Commenters in the NYT

The Gray Lady now seems to be against press freedom, writes James Howard Kunstler.

By **James Howard Kunstler**

Clusterfuck Nation



And so now Julian Assange of *Wikileaks* has been dragged out of his “sanctuary” in the London embassy of Ecuador for failing to clean his cat’s litter box. Have you ever cleaned a litter box?

The way we always did it was to spread some newspaper – say, *The New York Times* – on the floor, transfer the used cat litter onto it, wrap it into a compact package, and put it in the trash.

It was interesting to scan the comments section of the *Times*’s stories about the Assange arrest: [Times readers](#) almost uniformly presented themselves as a lynch mob out for Assange’s blood. So much for the spirit of liberalism and the old “Gray Lady” who published *The Pentagon Papers* purloined by Daniel Ellsberg lo so many years ago. Reading between the lines in that once-venerable newspaper – by which I mean gleaning their slant on the news – one surmises that the *Times* has actually come out *against* freedom of the press, a curious attitude, but consistent with the neo-Jacobin zeitgeist in “blue” America these days.

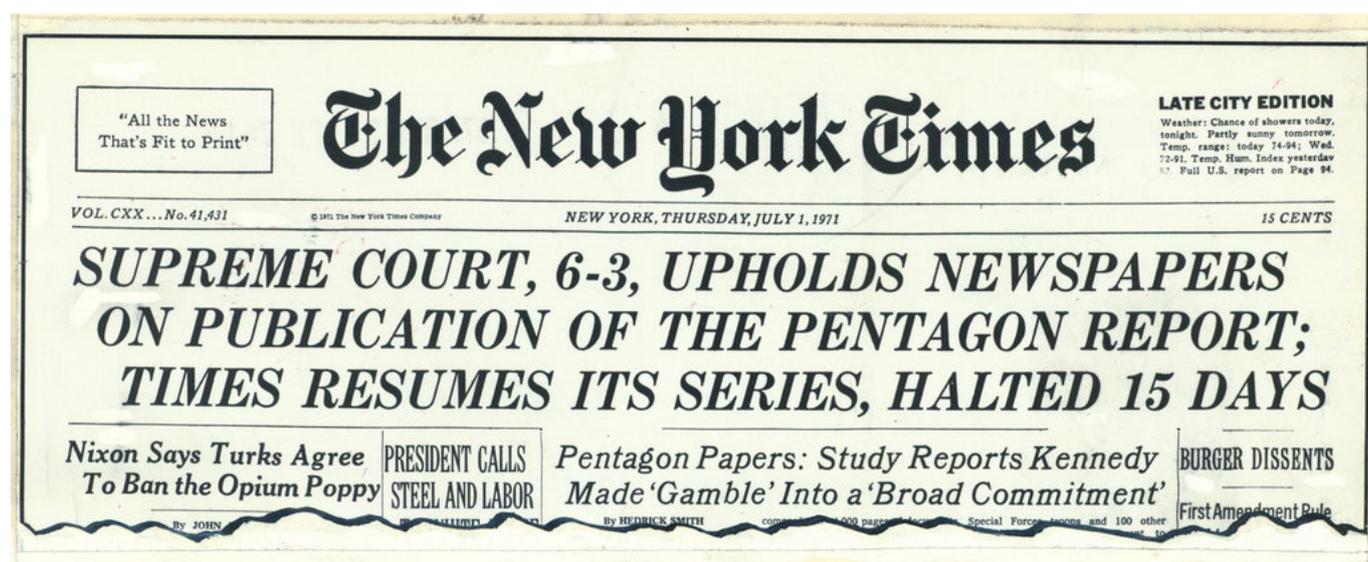
Anyway, how could anyone expect Assange to clean his cat’s litter box when he was unable to go outside his sanctuary to buy a fresh bag of litter, and was denied newspapers this past year, as well as any other contact with the outside world?

U.S. government prosecutors had better tread lightly in bringing Assange to the sort of justice demanded by readers of *The New York Times* – which is to say: lock him up in some SuperMax solitary hellhole and throw away the key. The show trial of Julian Assange on U.S. soil, when it comes to pass,

may end up being the straw that stirs America's Mickey Finn as a legitimate republic.

## Symptom of Mass Confusion

The bloodthirsty hysteria among *New York Times* readers is a symptom of the mass confusion sown by agencies of the U.S. government itself when its own agents ventured to meddle in the national election of 2016 and then blame it on "the Russians." As you will learn in the months ahead, it was the *Times* itself, and other corporate news organizations, who *colluded* with officers of the FBI, the Department of Justice, the CIA, and the Obama White House to concoct a phony narrative about Trump being in cahoots with Vladimir Putin, thus depriving Hillary Clinton of her "turn" in the White House; and then to join those agencies, and the grotesquely dishonest two-year investigation of Special Counsel Robert Mueller, in a cover-your-ass operation to hide their nefarious and criminal acts.



The USA has a lot of sorting to do and, of course, the new Democratic-led Congress is already trying as hard as possible to prevent that from happening, the latest being their piling on Attorney General William Barr for testifying

under oath that he believed the government ran a spying operation on candidate Donald Trump. The existence of FISA warrants establishes that as a fact, as does the million-dollar payment by the CIA and U.S. Defense Department to international man of mystery Stefan Halper, the secret agent (posing as an Oxford professor) commissioned to entrap Trump campaign associate Carter Page. The ugly cascade of truth about that ploy, and many other seditious subterfuges run by U.S. officials, will eventually bury the Jacobin "resistance" under more used cat litter than the Ecuadorian embassy staff could ever dream of.

The official charges so far against Julian Assange include skipping bail in the U.K. and supposedly attempting to assist the U.S. soldier then known as Bradley Manning to find a password for entering certain U.S. government computer data bases. The U.K. bail matter revolved around Assange's extradition to Sweden on a bullshit rape charge that was subsequently dropped as having no merit by Swedish authorities.

The U.S. supposedly reserves the authority to lob additional charges at Assange, though they may face a lengthy extradition battle with his attorneys to lever him out of the U.K. and into U.S. custody. In the meantime, Assange may receive a Nobel Prize as a symbol of a lone conscience standing up against the despotic deceits of the world's Deep States. Wouldn't that gum up the works nicely? I'd like to see *The New York Times's* front page headline on that story: "Russian Colluder Wins Nobel Prize, Put on Trial in Federal Court." By then, the United States of America will

be so completely gaslighted that it will pulsate in the darkness like a death star about to explode.

**James Howard Kunstler is author of “The Geography of Nowhere,” which he says he wrote “Because I believe a lot of people share my feelings about the tragic landscape of highway strips, parking lots, housing tracts, mega-malls, junked cities, and ravaged countryside that makes up the everyday environment where most Americans live and work.” He has written several other works of nonfiction and fiction. Read more about him [here](#). This article first appeared on his blog, [ClusterfuckNation](#).**

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