

New Fears for Julian Assange

Legendary journalist John Pilger has been to see Assange in Belmarsh Prison in London and his report is not encouraging.

Journalist John Pilger visited imprisoned *WikiLeaks* founder Julian Assange on Tuesday and has raised an alarm about Assange's "deteriorated" health.

Pilger said in a Tweet on Wednesday that Assange is "isolated" and treated "worse than a murderer."

"I now fear for him," Pilger wrote.

Do not forget Julian [#Assange](#). Or you will lose him.

I saw him in Belmarsh prison and his health has deteriorated. Treated worse than a murderer, he is isolated, medicated and denied the tools to fight the bogus charges of a US extradition. I now fear for him. Do not forget him.

– John Pilger (@johnpilger) [August 7, 2019](#)

Assange is suffering from an undisclosed ailment and has been confined to the hospital ward at the maximum security prison for several weeks. He was arrested on April 11 by British police who were called by the Ecuadorian government into its London embassy in apparent violation of international asylum law. Assange had been granted political asylum by Ecuador in 2012. He had been suffering health problems in the embassy but British authorities refused to allow him to leave the embassy for treatment and return without being arrested.

Almost immediately after his eventual arrest the United States unveiled an indictment against him for alleged intrusion into a government computer although the indictment

itself describes normal procedures of investigative journalism: encouraging a source to provide more information and working to protect the source's identity.

On May 23, Assange was charged under the U.S. Espionage Act for possession and dissemination of classified information given to him by *WikiLeak*'s source, Chelsea Manning, a former U.S. army intelligence analyst. It was the first time the Espionage Act was used against a journalist for publishing classified information.

Manning, meanwhile, is imprisoned in Alexandria, VA for refusing to testify to a grand jury on Assange's case. Since Assange has already been twice indicted, it is not clear if a new indictment against him is being prepared. On Wednesday, the judge in Manning's case denied her a hearing and said \$1,000-a-day fines against her did not amount to "punishment."

Assange is now fighting an extradition request from the United States as he serves a 50-week sentence in Belmarsh for having skipped bail in an unrelated Swedish investigation into sexual assault allegations, which had been dropped twice before by Swedish authorities, but was revived after his arrest. Assange had sought asylum in the Ecuador embassy because he feared extradition to the United States, fears that have been borne out by events.

He faces 175 years in prison in the U.S.
