Continued Detention of WikiLeaks Founder and Publisher Julian Assange

Julian Assange, founder and publisher of WikiLeaks, is currently detained in Belmarsh high-security prison, United Kingdom, pending extradition to the United States of America. On 11 April 2019, after the Government of Ecuador had decided to stop granting him asylum in its London embassy, Assange was arrested by the British police, and found guilty that day of breaching the UK Bail Act. On 1 May 2019, he was sentenced to 50 weeks in prison in the United Kingdom, and the Government of the United States unsealed an indictment against him for alleged computer intrusion, based on a series of leaks provided by US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning. The charges were extended on 23 May 2019 to violating the US Espionage Act of 1917.

Several lawyers, politicians, journalists and academics consider Assange's arrest in the United Kingdom and prosecution in the United States for publishing leaked documents of public interest an attack on press freedom and international law. After examining Assange in prison on 9 May 2019, UN special rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment Nils Melzer concluded: "In addition to physical ailments, Mr Assange showed all symptoms typical for prolonged exposure to psychological torture, including extreme stress, chronic anxiety and intense psychological trauma." In a letter sent on 29 October 2019 to the UK Government, Melzer wrote: "I found that the UK had contributed decisively to producing the observed medical symptoms, most notably through its participation, over the course of almost a decade, in Mr. Assange's arbitrary confinement, his judicial persecution, as well as his sustained and unrestrained public mobbing, intimidation and defamation. (...) British officials have contributed to Mr. Assange's psychological torture or ill-treatment, whether through perpetration, or through attempt, complicity or other forms of participation. (...) Recurring and serious violations of Mr. Assange's due process rights by UK authorities have rendered both his criminal conviction and sentencing for bail violation and the US extradition proceedings inherently
arbitrary. (...) The detention regime currently imposed on Mr. Assange appears to be unnecessary, disproportionate, and discriminatory and to perpetuate his exposure to psychological torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- **EFJ statement:** "The arbitrary detention of Julian Assange set a dangerous precedent for journalists"
- **Open letter by Jean-Hervé Bradol and Rony Brauman (MSF) in Le Monde:** "Nous appelons à la libération de Julian Assange et de Chelsea Manning, victimes de la vengeance d'Etats"
- **Statement by Robert Mahoney (CPJ Deputy Executive Director):** "For the sake of press freedom, Julian Assange must be defended"
- **International journalist statement in defence of Julian Assange:** "Speak Up for Assange"
- **News report by The Guardian:** "Julian Assange's health is so bad he 'could die in prison', say 60 doctors"
- **Statement of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ):** "Journalism is not a crime, Julian Assange must be released"
- **Letter sent by the UN Special Rapporteur on torture to the UK Government**

### FOLLOW-UPS

- **21 Feb 2020 | NEW** CoE Human Rights Commissioner declared that "Julian Assange should not be extradited due to potential impact on press freedom and concerns about ill-treatment".  
  - **Statement by Dunja Mijatović**

- **30 Jan 2020 | NEW** On 28 January 2020, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution titled “Threats to media freedom and journalists’ security in Europe, which states that member states should consider” the detention and criminal prosecution of Mr Julian Assange sets a dangerous precedent for journalists, and join the recommendation of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment who declared, on 1 November 2019, that Mr Assange's extradition to the United States must be barred and that he must be promptly released."
PACE resolution 2317 on “Threats to media freedom and journalists' security in Europe”