

Stella Moris accepts award on behalf of Julian Assange at the Austrian Journalists Club (ÖJC) 2022

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Stella Moris: Thank you, I'm very moved by the solidarity and warmth and welcoming that we've received here. And I'm sure Julian would be too. And I'll be sure to share this emotion with Julian when I speak to him because he is sitting in Belmarsh prison, where there is an ongoing attempt to isolate him, to discourage him and to demoralise him. And this is the antidote. I'd like to thank the Austrian Journalist Club for awarding the Solidarity Price to Julian. Julian was in Vienna in 2009 and he would have loved to be here today. Julian has been in Belmarsh Prison for 1053 days, today. He was arrested on the 11th of April three years ago. Our youngest child was just a few weeks old. He was put in prison a year before COVID started. But he hasn't been free since 2010. He was first arrested on the 7th of December 2010, eight days after WikiLeaks started publishing Cablegate. Julian is not serving a sentence in Belmarsh prison. He's there on administrative detention because the United States wants to extradite him to face a prison sentence of 175 years, which Reporters Without Borders says is the highest sentence that any person is facing in any country for their publishing work. Julian is suffering every day and he is surviving. The reality is that extradition is 90 percent politics and just 10 percent law. So today is critical in shaping what is possible for Julian's survival and the Austrian Journalist Club doesn't stand alone. Amnesty International, the Committee to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Watch, the National Union of Journalists in the UK, they all stand in solidarity with Julian calling for his freedom and condemning this prosecution, which is an attack on journalism itself. Julian is a political prisoner, and political imprisonment serves the purpose of removing a person from the public imagination. Of killing them in a sense, to history and to society. Kristinn referred to a recent revelation. We learnt that the CIA had developed concrete plans under Mike Pompeo to kill Julian. But to assassinate him they first deployed a more comprehensive plan to assassinate his character, to smear him and libel him, to make him out to be everything that he is not. And that culminated, while there were many stories that were false, information was planted to create a false impression, false information about Julian, culminating in a front page story in The Guardian, stating that Julian and Paul Manafort, Donald Trump's campaign manager,

had met three times in the embassy. This was completely invented and it is now universally accepted that this story was a complete fabrication. The Solidarity Prize reminds those responsible for Julian's imprisonment that this prosecution is an affront to journalists everywhere and that there is no press freedom in the West as long as Julian is in prison. Because Julian is also a prisoner of conscience. Publishing the truth, the truth is an act of conscience, especially when you're under threat and intimidation. There are plenty of subsidies, some of which have been spoken about today. For those who are willing to bend the truth or to publish half truths including incentives from the weapons industry the cost of telling the truth has increased dramatically exponentially since Julian's imprisonment and persecution. His imprisonment is the head on a pike. To chill the press and to intimidate individual journalists. This can happen to you. Julian is being punished for the publication of inconvenient truths about the true face of war. We meet here today with the shadow hanging over us, over this room, over Europe, over Belmarsh, over humanity itself, and we stand on the edge of a precipice. Journalists and publishers must have the freedom to publish the truth about war because telling the truth is not just an act of conscience but also a matter of life and death for those who are suffering war. And yet telling the truth has become a crime. And the publisher who has done the most to counter the manipulation of information during wars, during the Iraq and Afghan wars, by publishing the concealed civilian death toll, by exposing war crimes such as collateral murder, and the subsequent cover up, is in a high security prison because he received that information from a journalistic source and he put it where it belonged, in the knowledge of the public and the conscience of the public. I want to say a few words about what we think is unthinkable. In 2010, many people said it was unthinkable that the US would prosecute Julian or try to extradite him or try to put him in prison for the rest of his life. In 2010, they said it was unthinkable that the US would seriously engage in plans, concrete plans to assassinate Julian. In 2010, many would say it was unthinkable that the UK and the US would collude to inflict psychological torture on a journalist and subject him to arbitrary detention for over a decade or the rest of his life because of what he published. And yet here we are. We know that the Obama administration from the beginning was seriously considering charging Julian, but refrained because the Obama administration recognised that to do so would criminalise investigative journalism, would attack the press, would do away with press freedom. The recognition was that to prosecute Julian, the US would have to prosecute him as a publisher, as a journalist. The Obama administration commuted Chelsea Manning's sentence, who was the source of the publications. And then the Trump administration decided that actually journalists and publishers are fair game. And so he proceeded to prosecute Julian, not as a whistleblower, as a journalist. And setting that precedent, not as a US journalist, as a foreign journalist publishing from abroad, setting a new global standard. Think about what that means. The US is extending its so-called Espionage Act beyond its borders to limit press freedom abroad. It's creating a new normal, a race to the bottom, an opportunity for authoritarians everywhere to use the same logic against their journalists and foreign journalists who dare expose there are war crimes. There is no safe place for journalists as long as Julian is in prison. In 2010, many said that the possibility of Julian being assassinated by the United States was some kind of paranoid fantasy, but not for

Mike Pompeo. For Mike Pompeo this was a high priority. The assassination of Julian was discussed at the highest levels of the Trump administration. And not just Julian. Other unnamed WikiLeaks associates in Europe and European countries were also being considered for assassination, according to an investigative report published in September. That report had over 30 sources from the National Security Council of the United States, both named and unnamed from the CIA and from the White House, the Trump White House. And when it was published, Mike Pompeo confirmed the story by calling for the sources to be prosecuted. There is nothing that is unthinkable anymore. There is no freedom of press and there is no freedom of conscience as long as Julian is imprisoned. The unthinkable is here, the unthinkable is now. Free Julian and may peace return to Europe and to every country suffering the scourge of war. Thank you.

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