

Another example of the Western system of justice: The execution of Julian Assange

By Chris Hedges, RT, 14 December 2021

Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and host of RT's On Contact, a weekly interview series on US foreign policy, economic realities and civil liberties in American society. He's the author of 14 books, including several New York Times best-sellers.

He exposed empire as a criminal enterprise. He documented its lies, its callous disregard for human life, its rampant corruption, and its innumerable war crimes. But, as history shows, empires kill those who inflict deep wounds.

Let us name Julian Assange's executioners. Joe Biden. Boris Johnson. Scott Morrison. Theresa May. Lenin Moreno. Donald Trump. Barack Obama. Mike Pompeo. Hillary Clinton. Lord Chief Justice Ian Burnett and Lord Justice Timothy Victor Holroyde. Crown Prosecutors James Lewis QC, Clair Dobbin QC and Joel Smith. District Judge Vanessa Baraitser. Assistant US Attorney in the Eastern District of Virginia Gordon Kromberg. William Burns, the director of the CIA. Ken McCallum, the director general of MI5.

Let us acknowledge that the goal of these executioners, who discussed kidnapping and assassinating Assange, has always been his annihilation. That Assange, who is in precarious physical and psychological health, and who suffered a stroke during court video proceedings on October 27, has been condemned to death should not come as a surprise. The 10 years he has been detained, seven in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London and nearly three in the high-security Belmarsh prison, were accompanied by a lack of sunlight and exercise, and unrelenting threats, pressure, anxiety and stress. "His eyes were out of sync, his right eyelid would not close, his memory was blurry," his fiancée Stella Moris said of the stroke.

His steady deterioration has led to hallucinations and depression. He takes antidepressant medication and the antipsychotic quetiapine. He has been observed pacing his cell until he collapses, punching himself in the face and banging his head against the wall. He has spent weeks in the medical wing of Belmarsh. Prison authorities found "half of a razor blade" hidden under his socks. He has repeatedly called the suicide hotline run by the Samaritans because he has thought about killing himself "hundreds of times a day." The executioners have not yet completed their grim work.

Toussaint L'Ouverture, who led the Haitian independence movement, the only successful slave revolt in human history, was physically destroyed in the same manner, locked by the French in an unheated and cramped prison cell and left to die of exhaustion, malnutrition, apoplexy, pneumonia and probably tuberculosis.

Assange committed empire's greatest sin. He exposed it as a criminal enterprise. He documented its lies, callous disregard for human life, rampant corruption and innumerable war crimes. Republican or Democrat. Conservative or Labour. Trump or Biden. It does not

matter. The goons who oversee the empire sing from the same Satanic songbook. Empires always kill those who inflict deep and serious wounds.

Rome's long persecution of the Carthaginian general Hannibal, forcing him in the end to commit suicide, and the razing of Carthage repeats itself in epic after epic. Crazy Horse. Patrice Lumumba. Malcolm X. Ernesto "Che" Guevara. Sukarno. Ngo Dinh Diem. Fred Hampton. Salvador Allende. If you cannot be bought off, if you will not be intimidated into silence, you will be killed.

The obsessive CIA attempts to assassinate Fidel Castro, which, because none succeeded, have a Keystone Cop incompetence to them, included contracting Sam Giancana, Al Capone's successor in Chicago, along with Miami mobster Santo Trafficante Jr., to kill the Cuban leader, attempting to poison Castro's cigars with a botulinum toxin, providing Castro with a tubercle bacilli-infected scuba-diving suit, booby-trapping a conch shell on the sea floor where he often dived, slipping botulism-toxin pills in one of his drinks, and using a pen outfitted with a hypodermic needle to poison him.

The current cabal of assassins hides behind a judicial burlesque overseen in London by portly judges in gowns and white horse-hair wigs mouthing legal Alice-in-Wonderland absurdities. It is a dark reprise of Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Mikado', with the Lord High Executioner drawing up lists of people "who would not be missed."

I watched the latest instalment of the Assange show trial via video link on Friday. I listened to the reading of the ruling granting the appeal by the United States to extradite him. Assange's lawyers have two weeks to appeal to the Supreme Court, which they are expected to do. I am not optimistic.

Friday's ruling was devoid of legal analysis. It fully accepted the conclusions of the lower-court judge about increased risk of suicide and inhumane prison conditions in the United States. But the ruling argued that US Diplomatic Note no. 74, given to the court on February 5, 2021, which offered "assurances" that Assange would be well treated, overrode the lower court's conclusions. It was a remarkable legal non sequitur. The ruling would not have gotten a passing grade in a first-semester law school course. But legal erudition is not the point. The judicial railroading of Assange, which has eviscerated one legal norm after another, has, as Franz Kafka wrote, turned "lying into a universal principle."

The decision to grant the extradition was based on four "assurances" given to the court by the US government. The two-judge appellate panel ruled that the "assurances" "entirely answer the concerns which caused the judge [in the lower court] to discharge Mr. Assange." The "assurances" promise that Assange will not be subject to special administrative measures (SAMs), which keep prisoners in extreme isolation and allow the government to monitor conversations with lawyers, overruling attorney-client privilege; can, if the government in his native Australia agrees, serve out his sentence there; will receive adequate clinical and

psychological care; and, pre-trial and post trial, will not be held in the administrative maximum facility (ADX) in Florence, Colorado.

“There is no reason why this court should not accept the assurances as meaning what they say,” the judges wrote. “There is no basis for assuming that the USA has not given the assurances in good faith.” And, with these rhetorical feints, the judges signed Assange’s death warrant.

None of the “assurances” offered by Biden’s Department of Justice (DoJ) are worth the paper they’re written on. All come with escape clauses. None are legally binding. Should Assange do “something subsequent to the offering of these assurances that meets the tests for the imposition of SAMs or designation to ADX,” he will be subject to these coercive measures. And you can be assured that any incident, no matter how trivial, will be used, if Assange is extradited, as an excuse to toss him into the mouth of the dragon.

Should Australia, which has marched in lockstep with the US in the persecution of their citizen, not agree to his transfer, he will remain for the rest of his life in a US prison. But so what? If Australia does not request a transfer it “cannot be a cause for criticism of the USA, or a reason for regarding the assurances as inadequate to meet the judge’s concerns,” the ruling read. And even if that were not the case, it would take Assange 10 to 15 years to appeal his sentence all the way up to the Supreme Court, which would be more than enough time for the state assassins to finish him off.

I’m not sure how to respond to assurance number four, stating that Assange will not be held pre-trial in ADX Florence. No one is held pre-trial in ADX Florence. But it sounds reassuring, so I guess those in the Biden DoJ who crafted the diplomatic note added it.

ADX Florence is not the only supermax prison in the United States that might house Assange, of course. He could be shipped out to one of our other Guantanamo-like facilities. [Daniel Hale](#), the former US Air Force intelligence analyst currently imprisoned for releasing top-secret documents that exposed widespread civilian casualties caused by US drone strikes, has been held since October in a communications management unit (CMU) at USP Marion, a federal penitentiary in Marion, Illinois. CMUs are highly restrictive cells that replicate the near-total isolation imposed by SAMs.

Ironically, the High Court ruling came as Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced at the virtual [Summit for Democracy](#) that the Biden administration would provide new funding to protect reporters targeted because of their work and support independent international journalism. Blinken’s “assurances” that the Biden administration would defend a free press, at the very moment the administration was demanding Assange’s extradition, is a glaring example of the rank hypocrisy and mendacity that makes the Democrats, as journalist Glen Ford used to say, “not the lesser evil, but the more effective evil.”

Assange is charged in the US under 17 counts of the Espionage Act and one count of hacking into a government computer. The charges could see him sentenced to 175 years in prison, even though he is not a US citizen and WikiLeaks is not a US-based publication. If he is found guilty, it will effectively criminalize the investigative work of all journalists and publishers, anywhere in the world and of any nationality, who possess classified documents to shine a light on the inner workings of power. This mortal assault on the press will have been orchestrated, we must not forget, by a Democratic administration. It will set a legal precedent that will delight other totalitarian regimes and autocrats who, emboldened by the United States, will gleefully seize journalists and publishers, no matter where they are located, who publish inconvenient truths.

There is no legal basis to hold Assange in prison. There is no legal basis to try him, a foreign national, under the Espionage Act. The CIA spied on him while he was in the Ecuadorian Embassy through a Spanish company, UC Global, contracted to provide embassy security. This spying included recording the privileged conversations between Assange and his lawyers. This fact alone invalidates any future trial.

After seven years in a cramped room without sunlight in the embassy, Assange has been held for nearly three years in a high-security prison in London. As UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer has testified, that's so the state can continue the relentless abuse and torture it knows will lead to his psychological and physical disintegration. The persecution of Assange is designed to send a message to anyone who might consider exposing the corruption, dishonesty and depravity that defines the black heart of our global elites.

Dean Yates can tell you what US "assurances" are worth. He was the Reuters bureau chief in Baghdad on the morning of July 12, 2007 when his Iraqi colleagues Namir Noor-Eldeen and Saeed Chmagh were killed, along with nine other men, by US Army Apache gunships. Two children were seriously wounded. The US government spent three years lying to Yates, Reuters, and the rest of the world about the killings, although the army had video evidence of the massacre taken by the Apaches during the attack. The video, known as the Collateral Murder video, was leaked in 2010 by Chelsea Manning to Assange. For the first time, here was proof that those killed were not, as the army had repeatedly insisted, engaged in a firefight. It exposed the lies spun by the US that it could not locate the video footage and had never attempted to cover up the killings.

Watch my full interview with Yates here:

The Spanish courts can tell you what US "assurances" are worth. Spain was given an assurance that its citizen David Mendoza Herrarte, if extradited to the US to face trial on drug trafficking charges, could serve his prison sentence in his homeland. But, for six years, the DoJ repeatedly refused Spanish transfer requests, relenting only when the Spanish Supreme Court intervened.

The people in Afghanistan can tell you what US “assurances” are worth. US military, intelligence, and diplomatic officials knew for 18 years that the war in Afghanistan was a quagmire, yet they publicly stated, over and over, that the military intervention was making steady progress.

The people in Iraq can tell you what US “assurances” are worth. They were invaded and subject to a brutal war based on fabricated evidence about weapons of mass destruction.

The people of Iran can tell you what US “assurances” are worth. The United States, in the 1981 Algiers Accords, promised not to interfere in Iran’s internal affairs and then funded and backed the People’s Mujahedin Organization of Iran, a terrorist group based in Iraq and dedicated to overthrowing the Iranian regime.

The thousands of people tortured in US global black sites can tell you what US “assurances” are worth. CIA officers, when questioned by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence about the widespread use of torture, secretly destroyed video tapes of interrogations while insisting there had been no “destruction of evidence.”

The numbers of treaties, agreements, deals, promises, and “assurances” made by the US around the globe and subsequently violated are too numerous to list. Hundreds of treaties signed with Native American tribes, alone, have been ignored by the US government.

Assange, at tremendous personal cost, warned us. He gave us the truth. Now the ruling class is crucifying him for this truth. And with his crucifixion, the dim lights of our democracy go dark.

This article was first published on [Scheerpost](#)