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Julian Assange

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Julian Assange



Julian Assange

Born	3 July 1971 (age 40) ^{[1][2][3]} Townsville, Queensland, Australia
Occupation	Editor-in-chief and spokesperson for WikiLeaks Economist Freedom of Expression Award (2008) Amnesty International UK Media Award (2009) Sam Adams Award (2010) Le Monde Person of the Year (2010) Sydney Peace Foundation gold medal (2011) Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism (2011) Voltaire Award of the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties (2011) Walkleys Award for Outstanding Contribution to Journalism (2011)
Awards	

Julian Paul Assange ((listen) /əˈsɒnz/ *ə-SONZH*; born 3 July 1971) is an Australian publisher,^{[4][5]} journalist,^{[6][7][8]} media and [internet entrepreneur](#), media critic, writer, computer programmer and [political/internet activist](#). He is the [editor in chief](#) and founder of [WikiLeaks](#), a media website which publishes information from [whistleblowers](#). The site acts as a conduit for worldwide [news leaks](#), with a stated purpose of creating [open governance](#).

WikiLeaks has published material about [extrajudicial killings in Kenya](#), [toxic waste dumping in Côte d'Ivoire](#), [Church of Scientology manuals](#), [Guantanamo Bay procedures](#), and banks such as [Kaupthing](#) and [Julius Baer](#).^[9] In 2010, WikiLeaks published [Iraq War documents](#) and [Afghan War documents](#) about American involvement in the wars, some of which was classified material. On 28 November 2010, WikiLeaks and its five international print

media partners ([*Der Spiegel*](#), [*The New York Times*](#), [*Le Monde*](#), [*The Guardian*](#) and [*El País*](#)) began publishing [U.S. diplomatic cables](#).^[10]

Assange was a computer [hacker](#) in his youth, before becoming a skilled programmer and internationally renowned activist.^[11] He has lived in several countries and has made public appearances in many parts of the world to speak about [freedom of the press](#), [censorship](#), and [investigative journalism](#). He has received numerous awards and nominations, including the 2009 [Amnesty International Media Award](#), Readers' Choice for *TIME* magazine's 2010 Person of the Year, the 2011 Sydney Peace Foundation gold medal and the 2011 [Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism](#).^[12] Snorre Valen, a Norwegian parliamentarian, nominated him for the 2011 [Nobel Peace Prize](#).^[13]

In 2010, a [European Arrest Warrant](#) was issued for Assange in response to a Swedish police request for questioning in relation to a sexual assault investigation. Assange voluntarily attended a police station in England on 7 December 2010, and was arrested and taken into custody. After ten days in [Wandsworth](#) prison, Assange was freed on bail with a residence requirement at Ellingham Hall in Norfolk, England, fitted with an electronic tag and ordered to report to police daily. Assange appealed a February 2011 decision by English courts to extradite him to [Sweden](#), claiming the allegations of wrongdoing were "without basis".^{[14][15]} On 2 November 2011 the [High Court](#) upheld the [extradition](#) decision and rejected all four grounds of appeal presented by Assange's legal representatives. [Costs](#) of £19000 were also awarded against Assange. On 5 December, the [High Court](#) certified that his case raised a point of law of general "public importance" that ought to be considered by the [Supreme Court](#). The question certified is whether a prosecutor can be a judicial authority.^{[16][17][18]} Supreme Court has heard the appeal on 1 and 2 February 2012.^[19] The court reserved its judgment, and its decision is expected within weeks.^[20]

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Early life

Born Julian Paul Assange in [Townsville](#), Queensland, Assange lived with his mother Christine on [Magnetic Island](#) in a cottage at [Picnic Bay](#).^{[21][22]} When Julian was one year old, Christine married theatre director Brett Assange, "who gave him his surname".^{[22][23][24]} After leaving, the family "returned to the island in 1976, with Julian and her

[Christine's] "new husband", theatre director Brett Assange, they lived in [Horseshoe Bay](#), "in an old abandoned pineapple farm".^[25] Assange gave information about his background in an interview for Making Trouble: Essays Against the New Australian Complacency: "according to Assange, his mother", Christine Ann Assange (nee Hawkins)^[26] "was the daughter of Scottish-born principal of Northern Rivers College ([Southern Cross University](#)), Warren Hawkins", and Norma Hawkins (nee Carelton), who "was a specialist in medieval literature".^{[27][28][29][30]} Norma Hawkins, Assange's maternal grandmother, is mentioned in the book [Underground: Tales of Hacking, Madness and Obsession on the Electronic Frontier](#) (1997).^[31] Assange has reportedly claimed himself that he is of [Scottish](#), [Irish](#), [Taiwanese](#), [Torres Strait Islander](#) and [French](#) ancestry: he has said that "his maternal ancestors came to Australia in the mid-nineteenth century from Scotland and Ireland"; he has also said: "my mother is French", referring to her ancestry. Referring to his paternal grandfather: "my grandfather was a Taiwanese pirate".."who settled on Thursday Island where he met and married a Thursday Islander woman". He has also said that Brett Assange "was the descendant of a Chinese immigrant who had settled on Thursday Island", "his great-great-great-grandfather was a Taiwanese pirate". The name Assange is an [anglicization](#) of "Ah Sang" - Cantonese for "Mr Sang".^{[32][33][34]}

In the interview for Making Trouble, he tells about who he believes is his "biological father": "he did not meet his biological father, John Shipton, until he was 25", Manne writes; "strangely and perhaps revealingly, it [WikiLeaks] was registered under the names of two fathers, his biological one, John Shipton, and his cypherpunk political one, John Young, a New York architect who ran the intelligence leak website [Cryptome](#), which could be seen as WikiLeaks' predecessor".^{[35][36][37][38]} John Shipton is also referred to as an "architect", and an "Australian citizen living in Kenya", who resided in [Nairobi](#), [Kenya](#) in 2008 at the same time as Julian.^{[39][40][41]} He "met Assange's mother, Christine, then aged 17, at an antiques shop on his way to a Vietnam war demonstration".."little is known about the relationship, except that it had ended by the time of their son's first birthday – if not earlier"; Shipton "never took up residence or if he did only took up residence for a very short time" and "had no contact with [Assange]".^[42]

Youth

During Assange's upbringing Brett and Christine Assange ran a [touring theatre company](#). His stepfather, Julian's first "real dad", described Julian as "a very sharp kid" with "a keen sense of right and wrong". "He always stood up for the underdog ... he was always very angry about people ganging up on other people."^[24] In the mid-70's, Assange and his parents moved to North [Lismore](#), [New South Wales](#), and Assange attended Goolmangar Primary School in the nearby town of [Goolmangar](#) from 1979 to 1983.^[43]

In 1979, his mother remarried "Leif Meynall — or Leif Hamilton",^[44] her new husband was a musician whom Assange believed belonged to a [New Age](#) group called [The Family](#), led by Yoga teacher Anne Hamilton-Byrne. The couple had a son, but broke up in 1982 and engaged in a [custody](#) struggle for Assange's half-brother. His divorced mother fled her boyfriend and travelled across Australia, taking both children into hiding for the next five years. Assange moved thirty times before he turned 14, attending many schools, including Goolmangar Primary School, sometimes being [home-schooled](#).^{[21][45][46]} In an interview conducted by [Hans Ulrich Obrist](#), Assange stated that he had lived in 50 different towns and attended 37 different schools.^[47] The family "by the time he was 16 or 17" lived in "a tiny cement bungalow in the foothills of the [Dandenong Ranges](#), east of Melbourne", [Victoria](#), first in the town of "[Emerald](#) and then [Tecoma](#)", now in the outer eastern suburbs of Melbourne.^{[48][49]}

Hacking and conviction

In 1987, after turning 16, Assange began [hacking](#) under the name "Mendax" (derived from a phrase of [Horace](#): "splendide mendax", or "nobly untruthful").^[2] He and two other hackers joined to form a group they named the International Subversives. Assange wrote down the early rules of the subculture: "Don't damage computer systems you break into (including crashing them); don't change the information in those systems (except for altering logs to cover your tracks); and share information".^[2] The [Personal Democracy Forum](#) said he was "Australia's most famous ethical computer hacker."^[50] The [Australian Federal Police](#) became aware of this group and set up

"Operation Weather" to investigate their hacking. In September 1991, Mendax was discovered in the act of hacking into the Melbourne master terminal of [Nortel](#), the Canadian telecommunications company.^[2] In response the [Australian Federal Police](#) tapped Assange's phoneline and subsequently raided his Melbourne home in 1991.^[51] He was also reported to have accessed computers belonging to an Australian university,^[2] the [USAF](#) 7th Command Group in the [Pentagon](#)^[52] and other organisations, via [modem](#).^[53] It took three years to bring the case to court, where he was charged with 31 counts of hacking and related crimes. Nortel said his incursions cost them more than \$100,000. Assange's lawyers represented his hacking as a victimless crime. He pleaded guilty to 25 charges of hacking, after six charges were dropped, and was released on bond for good conduct with a fine of [A\\$2,100](#).^{[2][54]} The judge said "there is just no evidence that there was anything other than sort of intelligent inquisitiveness and the pleasure of being able to—what's the expression—surf through these various computers"^[2] and stated that Assange would have gone to jail for up to 10 years if he had not had such a disrupted childhood.^[52]

In 2011, court records revealed that in 1993, Assange helped the [Victoria Police](#) Child Exploitation Unit by providing technical advice and assisted in prosecuting persons.^[55]

Child custody issues

In 1988-1989, Assange married, then moved out and started living with his wife, Teresa, after they had a son, Daniel Assange.^{[56][57]} They split up before the period of Assange's arrest and conviction. They subsequently engaged in a lengthy custody struggle and did not agree on a custody arrangement until 1999.^{[2][58]}

The entire process prompted Assange and his mother to form Parent Inquiry Into Child Protection, an activist group centered on creating a "central databank" for otherwise inaccessible legal records related to child custody issues in Australia.^[58] In an interview with [ABC Radio](#), his mother explained their "most important" issue was demanding "that there be direct access to the children's court by any member of the public for an application for protection for any child that they believe is at serious risk from abuse, where the child protection agency has rejected that notification."^[59]

Employment and university studies

In 1993, Assange was involved in starting one of the first public [internet service providers](#) in Australia, Suburbia Public Access Network.^{[41][60]} Starting in 1994, he lived in Melbourne as a programmer and a developer of [free software](#).^[54] In 1995, he wrote *Strobe*, the first free and [open source port scanner](#).^{[61][62]} He contributed several [patches](#) to the [PostgreSQL](#) project in 1996.^{[63][64]} He helped to write the book *Underground: Tales of Hacking, Madness and Obsession on the Electronic Frontier* (1997), which credits him as a researcher and reports his history with International Subversives.^{[31][65]} Starting around 1997, he co-invented the [Rubberhose deniable encryption](#) system, a [cryptographic](#) concept made into a software package for [Linux](#) designed to provide [plausible deniability](#) against [rubber-hose cryptanalysis](#);^[66] he originally intended the system to be used "as a tool for [human rights](#) workers who needed to protect sensitive data in the field."^[67] Other [free software](#) that he has authored or co-authored includes the [Usenet](#) caching software NNTPCache^[68] and [Surfraw](#), a command-line interface for [web-based search engines](#). In 1999, he registered the domain leaks.org; but he says he "didn't do anything with it."^[69] Assange was characterised as a "cryptographer" in a Suelette Dreyfus article published in The Independent, 15 November 1999 - "This is just between us (and the spies)", and was said to have been the moderator of "the online Australian discussion forum AUCRYPTO", and during this time Assange claimed to have found a new patent relating to the US National Security Agency's technology for monitoring calls, "while investigating NSA capabilities". Assange said that "this patent should worry people. Everyone's overseas phone calls are or may soon be tapped, transcribed and archived in the bowels of an unaccountable foreign spy agency".^[70]

During this period he worked "in a number of different fields, as a security consultant, a researcher in journalism and started his own IT company", he has said.^[71] In 1998, "Assange co-founded his first and only Australian company, Earthmen Technology".^[72] From 2002 to 2005, Assange attended the [University of Melbourne](#) and [University of Canberra](#) as an undergraduate student, he started a [Bachelors of Science](#) degree, studying physics and

mathematics ([pure mathematics](#)) and briefly philosophy and neuroscience.^{[45][50][73][74]} In most of his maths courses, he received the minimum "pass" grade.^[75] He did not graduate; the fact that his fellow students were doing research for Pentagon's [DARPA](#) was reportedly a factor in motivating him to drop out and start WikiLeaks.^{[2][45][74]}

After founding WikiLeaks



Assange, in or before 2006
Main article: [WikiLeaks](#)

WikiLeaks was founded in 2006.^{[2][76]} That year, Assange wrote two essays setting out the philosophy behind WikiLeaks: "To radically shift regime behavior we must think clearly and boldly for if we have learned anything, it is that regimes do not want to be changed. We must think beyond those who have gone before us and discover technological changes that embolden us with ways to act in which our forebears could not."^{[77][78][79]} In his blog he wrote, "the more secretive or unjust an organization is, the more leaks induce fear and paranoia in its leadership and planning coterie.... Since unjust systems, by their nature, induce opponents, and in many places barely have the upper hand, mass leaking leaves them exquisitely vulnerable to those who seek to replace them with more open forms of governance."^{[77][80]}

Assange is the most prominent media spokesman on WikiLeaks' behalf. In June 2010, he was listed alongside several others as a member of the WikiLeaks advisory board.^{[81][82]} While newspapers have described him as a "director"^[83] or "founder"^[51] of WikiLeaks, Assange has said, "I don't call myself a founder";^[84] he does describe himself as the [editor in chief](#) of WikiLeaks,^[85] and has stated that he has the final decision in the process of vetting documents submitted to the site.^[86] Assange says that WikiLeaks has released more classified documents than the rest of the world press combined: "That's not something I say as a way of saying how successful we are – rather, that shows you the parlous state of the rest of the media. How is it that a team of five people has managed to release to the public more suppressed information, at that level, than the rest of the world press combined? It's disgraceful."^[76] He advocates a "transparent" and "scientific" approach to journalism, saying that "you can't publish a paper on physics without the full experimental data and results; that should be the standard in journalism."^{[87][88]} In 2006, [CounterPunch](#) called him "Australia's most infamous former computer hacker."^[89] [The Age](#) has called him "one of the most intriguing people in the world" and "internet's freedom fighter."^[69] Assange has called himself "extremely cynical".^[69] He has been described as being largely self-taught and widely read on science and mathematics,^[54] and as thriving on intellectual battle.^[90]

WikiLeaks has been involved in the publication of material documenting extrajudicial killings in Kenya, a report of toxic waste dumping on the coast of [Côte d'Ivoire](#), [Church of Scientology](#) manuals, [Guantanamo Bay](#) procedures, the [12 July 2007 Baghdad airstrike](#) video, and material involving large banks such as [Kaupthing](#) and [Julius Baer](#) among other documents.^[9] In 2008, Assange published an article entitled "The Hidden Curse of Thomas Paine", in which he wrote "What does it mean when only those facts about the world with economic powers behind them can be heard, when the truth lays naked before the world and no one will be the first to speak without payment or subsidy?"^[91]

Public appearances

In addition to exercising great authority and editorial control within WikiLeaks, Assange acts as its public face. He has appeared at media conferences such as New Media Days '09 in Copenhagen,^[92] the 2010 Logan Symposium in Investigative Reporting at the [UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism](#),^[93] and at hacker conferences, notably the 25th and 26th [Chaos Communication Congress](#).^[94] In the first half of 2010, he appeared on *Al Jazeera English*, *MSNBC*, *Democracy Now!*, *RT*, and *The Colbert Report* to discuss the release of the Baghdad airstrike video by WikiLeaks. On 3 June he appeared via videoconferencing at the [Personal Democracy Forum](#) conference with [Daniel Ellsberg](#).^{[95][96]} Ellsberg told *MSNBC* "the explanation he [Assange] used" for not appearing in person in the U.S. was that "it was not safe for him to come to this country."^[97] On 11 June he was to appear on a Showcase Panel at the [Investigative Reporters and Editors](#) conference in Las Vegas,^[98] but there are reports that he cancelled several days prior.^[99]

On 10 June 2010, it was reported that Pentagon officials were trying to determine his whereabouts.^{[100][101]} Based on this, there were reports that U.S. officials wanted to apprehend Assange.^[102] Ellsberg said that the arrest of [Bradley Manning](#) and subsequent speculation by U.S. officials about what Assange may be about to publish "puts his well-being, his physical life, in some danger now."^[97] In *The Atlantic*, [Marc Ambinder](#) called Ellsberg's concerns "ridiculous", and said that "Assange's tendency to believe that he is one step away from being thrown into a black hole hinders, and to some extent discredits, his work."^[103] In *Salon.com*, [Glenn Greenwald](#) questioned "screaming media reports" that there was a "manhunt" on Assange underway, arguing that they were only based on comments by "anonymous government officials" and might even serve a campaign by the U.S. government, by intimidating possible whistleblowers.

On 21 June 2010, he took part at a hearing in [Brussels](#), Belgium, appearing in public for the first time in nearly a month.^[104] He was a member on a panel that discussed [Internet censorship](#) and expressed his worries over the recent [filtering](#) in countries such as Australia. He also talked about secret [gag orders](#) preventing newspapers from publishing information about specific subjects and even divulging the fact that they are being gagged. Using an example involving *The Guardian*, he also explained how newspapers are altering their online archives sometimes by removing entire articles.^{[105][106]} He told *The Guardian* that he does not fear for his safety but is on permanent alert and will avoid travel to America, saying "[U.S.] public statements have all been reasonable. But some statements made in private are a bit more questionable." He said "politically it would be a great error for them to act. I feel perfectly safe but I have been advised by my lawyers not to travel to the U.S. during this period."^[104]

On 17 July, [Jacob Appelbaum](#) spoke on behalf of WikiLeaks at the 2010 [Hackers on Planet Earth](#) (HOPE) conference in New York City, replacing Assange due to the presence of federal agents at the conference.^{[107][108]} He announced that the WikiLeaks submission system was again up and running, after it had been temporarily suspended.^{[107][109]} Assange was a surprise speaker at a [TED conference](#) on 19 July 2010, in [Oxford](#), and confirmed that WikiLeaks was now accepting submissions again.^{[110][111][112]} On 26 July, after the release of the [Afghan War Diary](#), he appeared at the [Frontline Club](#) for a press conference.^[113]

2011

On 14 February 2011, Assange filed for the trademark "JULIAN ASSANGE" in Europe. The trademark is to be used for "public speaking services; news reporter services; journalism; publication of texts other than publicity texts; education services; entertainment services".^[114]

On 15 March 2011, Assange gave a speech at the [Cambridge Union Society](#).^{[115][116]} After initially discouraging recording, a video of this has been made available by the Society.^[117]

2012

In January 2012, WikiLeaks announced that Assange would launch "a series of in-depth conversations with key political players, thinkers and revolutionaries from around the world", titled *The World Tomorrow*.^[118] Reportedly,

the series would be at least broadcast by the [RT](#) (Russia Today) network.^{[119][120][121]} On February 19, 2012 the 500th episode of *The Simpsons*' "[At Long Last Leave](#)" was aired, which features Assange guest-starring as himself in a scene written by Australian [Kathy Lette](#), the wife of Assange's adviser [Geoffrey Robertson](#) QC.^{[122][123]}

Release of U.S. diplomatic cables

Main article: [United States diplomatic cables leak](#)

On 28 November 2010, WikiLeaks began releasing some of the 251,000 American [diplomatic cables](#) in their possession, of which over 53 percent are listed as [unclassified](#), 40 percent are "[Confidential](#)" and just over six percent are classified "[Secret](#)". The following day, the Attorney-General of Australia, [Robert McClelland](#), told the press that Australia would inquire into Assange's activities and WikiLeaks.^[124] He said that "from Australia's point of view, we think there are potentially a number of criminal laws that could have been breached by the release of this information. The [Australian Federal Police](#) are looking at that".^[125] McClelland would not rule out the possibility that Australian authorities will cancel Assange's passport, and warned him that he might face charges should he return to Australia.^[126] The Federal Police inquiry found that Assange had not committed any crime.^[127]

The [United States Department of Justice](#) launched a criminal investigation related to the leak. U.S. prosecutors are reportedly [considering charges](#) against Assange under several laws, but any prosecution would be difficult.^[128] In relation to its ongoing investigations of WikiLeaks, on 14 December 2010, the [U.S. Department of Justice](#) [issued a subpoena](#) ordering Twitter to release information relating to Assange's account, amongst others.^{[129][130]}

[Pentagon Papers](#) whistleblower [Daniel Ellsberg](#) said that Assange "is serving our democracy and serving our rule of law precisely by challenging the secrecy regulations, which are not laws in most cases, in this country." On the issue of national security considerations for the U.S., Ellsberg added, "He's obviously a very competent guy in many ways. I think his instincts are that most of this material deserves to be out. We are arguing over a very small fragment that doesn't. He has not yet put out anything that hurt anybody's national security."^[131] Assange told London reporters that the leaked cables showed U.S. ambassadors around the world were ordered "to engage in espionage behavior", which he said seemed to be "representative of a gradual shift to a lack of rule of law in U.S. institutions that needs to be exposed and that we have been exposing."^[132]

The WikiLeaks diplomatic cable revelations have been credited by some commentators with being a factor in sparking the [Tunisian Revolution](#), as such leaked cables revealed the degree of corruption in the then ruling government. Writing for *Foreign Policy* magazine, journalist Elizabeth Dickinson suggested that "Tunisians didn't need any more reasons to protest when they took to the streets these past weeks -- food prices were rising, corruption was rampant, and unemployment was staggering. But we might also count Tunisia as the first time that WikiLeaks pushed people over the brink..."^{[133][134]}

Recognition as a journalist

Assange received the 2009 Media award from [Amnesty International](#) for *Kenya: The Cry of Blood – Extra Judicial Killings and Disappearances*,^[81] and he has been recognized as a journalist by the [Centre for Investigative Journalism](#).^[71] Assange has been a member of the Australian journalist union, the [Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance](#), for several years, and in 2011, was made an honorary member.^{[135][136]} [Alex Massie](#) wrote an article in *The Spectator* called "Yes, Julian Assange is a journalist", but acknowledged that "newsman" might be a better description of Assange.^[61] [Alan Dershowitz](#) said "Without a doubt. He is a journalist, a new kind of journalist".^[137] Assange has said that he has been publishing factual material since age 25, and that it is not necessary to debate whether or not he is a journalist. He has stated that his role is "primarily that of a publisher and editor-in-chief who organises and directs other journalists".^[138]

Financial developments

On 6 December 2011, the Swiss bank, [PostFinance](#), announced that it had frozen assets of Assange's totalling 31,000 euros, because he had "provided false information regarding his place of residence" when opening the account.^[139] [MasterCard](#),^[140] [Visa Inc.](#),^[141] and [Bank of America](#)^[142] also halted dealings with WikiLeaks. Assange described these actions as "business McCarthyism".^[143] The English-language Swedish newspaper web-site "[Local](#)" quoted Assange on 27 December 2010, as saying that legal costs for the whistleblowing website and his own defence had reached £500,000. The decisions to halt donations to WikiLeaks by Visa, MasterCard and [PayPal](#) had cost £425,000, the same amount it costs the website to publish for six months. Assange said WikiLeaks had been receiving as much as £85,000 a day at its peak.^[144]

"Autobiography"

In December 2010, Assange sold the [publishing rights](#)^[145] to his proposed autobiography for over [£1 million](#). He told [The Sunday Times](#) that he was forced to enter the deals for an autobiography due to the financial difficulties he and the site encountered, stating "I don't want to write this book, but I have to. I have already spent £200,000 for legal costs and I need to defend myself and to keep WikiLeaks afloat."^[146]

A [draft](#) of this work was published, without Assange's consent, in September 2011. The book was [ghostwritten](#) by [Andrew O'Hagan](#) and was given the title *Julian Assange – The Unauthorised Autobiography* (2011). Assange and the publisher, [Canongate](#), gave differing accounts of the circumstances around the publication.^[147] ^[148]

Criticism



The **neutrality of this section is disputed**. Please see the discussion on the [talk page](#). Please do not remove this message until the [dispute is resolved](#). *(September 2011)*

A number of political and media commentators, as well as current and former U.S. government officials, have accused Assange of terrorism. When asked if he saw Assange more as a high-tech terrorist or as a whistleblower, like those who released the [Pentagon papers](#) in the 1970s, U.S. Vice President [Joe Biden](#) said: "I would argue it is closer to being a high-tech terrorist than the Pentagon papers."^[149] In May 2010, Senate Minority Leader [Mitch McConnell](#) had used the phrase, calling Assange "a high-tech terrorist", and saying "he has done enormous damage to our country. I think he needs to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law".^[150] Also in May 2010, former House Speaker [Newt Gingrich](#) said: "Information terrorism, which leads to people getting killed, is terrorism, and Julian Assange is engaged in terrorism. He should be treated as an enemy combatant."^[151]

In July 2010, after WikiLeaks released classified documents related to the [war in Afghanistan](#), [Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff](#), [Mike Mullen](#), said at a Pentagon news conference, "Disagree with the war all you want, take issue with the policy, challenge me or our ground commanders on the decisions we make to accomplish the mission we've been given, but don't put those who willingly go into harm's way even further in harm's way just to satisfy your need to make a point. Mr. Assange can say whatever he likes about the greater good he thinks he and his source are doing, but the truth is, they might already have on their hands the blood of some young soldier or that of an Afghan family." Assange responded later in an interview by saying, "There is, as far as we can tell, no incident of that. So it is a speculative charge. Of course, we are treating any possible revelation of the names of innocents seriously. That is why we held back 15,000 of these documents, to review that". Assange also pointed out the irony of U.S. officials and military leaders accusing him of having blood on his hands.^[152]

Support

The Australian government had considered charging Assange for treason,^[153] but later retracted its previous statements that Assange's actions were criminal. They also found no grounds to withdraw his Australian passport after an investigation by the Australian Federal Police. Since then, government representatives and the [major](#)

[opposition](#), including [Craig Emerson](#) the Minister for Trade and [Helen Coonan](#) the former minister for Communications, have made statements supportive of WikiLeaks and deprecated some threats. Emerson stated on ABC's Q&A program; "We condemn absolutely the threats that have been made by some people in the United States against Julian Assange and he deserves all of the rights of being an Australian citizen."^[154]

[Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva](#), then [president of Brazil](#), expressed his "solidarity" with Assange following his 2010 arrest in the United Kingdom.^{[155][156]} He further criticised the arrest of Assange as "an attack on [freedom of expression](#)".^[157]

[Prime Minister of Russia](#), [Vladimir Putin](#) condemned Assange's detention as "undemocratic".^[158] A source within the office of Russian President [Dmitry Medvedev](#) suggested that Assange be nominated for a Nobel Prize, and said that "Public and non-governmental organisations should think of how to help him."^[159]

In December 2010, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Opinion and Expression, [Frank LaRue](#), said Assange or other WikiLeaks staff should not face criminal charges for any information they disseminated, noting that "if there is a responsibility by leaking information it is of, exclusively of the person that made the leak and not of the media that publish it. And this is the way that transparency works and that corruption has been confronted in many cases."^[160]

[Daniel Ellsberg](#), who was working in the [U.S. Department of Defense](#) when he leaked the [Pentagon Papers](#) in 1971, was a signatory to a statement by an international group of former intelligence officers and ex-government officials in support of Assange's work, which was released in late December 2010. Other signatories included [David MacMichael](#), [Ray McGovern](#), and five recipients of annual [Sam Adams Award](#): [Frank Grevil](#), [Katharine Gun](#), [Craig Murray](#), [Coleen Rowley](#) and [Larry Wilkerson](#).^[161] Ellsberg has said, "If I released the Pentagon Papers today, the same rhetoric and the same calls would be made about me ... I would be called not only a traitor – which I was [called] then, which was false and slanderous – but I would be called a terrorist... Assange and [Bradley Manning](#) are no more terrorists than I am."^[162]



Demonstration in support of Assange in front of Sydney Town Hall, 10 December 2010.

Australian Prime Minister [Julia Gillard](#) has come under widespread condemnation and a backlash within her own party for failing to support Assange after calling the leaks "an illegal act" and suggesting that his Australian passport should be cancelled. Hundreds of lawyers, academics and journalists came forward in his support with Attorney-General [Robert McClelland](#), unable to explain how Assange had broken Australian law. Opposition Legal Affairs spokesman, Senator [George Brandis](#), a [Queen's Counsel](#), accused Gillard of being "clumsy" with her language, stating, "As far as I can see, he (Assange) hasn't broken any Australian law, nor does it appear he has broken any American laws." Foreign Minister [Kevin Rudd](#), who supports Assange, stated that any decision to cancel the passport would be his, not Gillard's. Queen's Counsel [Peter Faris](#), who acted for Assange in a hacking case 15 years ago, said that the motives of Swedish authorities in seeking Assange's extradition for alleged sex offences are suspect: "You have to say: why are they [Sweden] pursuing it? It's pretty obvious that if it was [Bill Bloggs](#), they wouldn't be going to the trouble." Following the Swedish Embassy issuing of a "prepared and unconvincing reply" in response to letters of protest, Gillard was called on to send a message to Sweden "querying the way charges were laid, investigated and dropped, only to be picked up again by a different prosecutor."^{[158][163][164][165][166]}

On 10 December 2010, over five hundred people rallied outside [Sydney Town Hall](#) and about three hundred and fifty people gathered in Brisbane^[167] where Assange's lawyer, Rob Stary, criticised Julia Gillard's position, telling the rally that the Australian government was a "sycophant" of the U.S. A petition circulated by [GetUp!](#), who have placed full page ads in support of Assange in [The New York Times](#) and [The Washington Times](#), received more than 50,000 signatures.^[165]

Awards

He won the 2009 [Amnesty International UK Media Award \(New Media\)](#),^[168] for exposing extrajudicial assassinations in [Kenya](#) by distributing and publicizing the [Kenya National Commission on Human Rights](#) (KNCHR)'s investigation *The Cry of Blood – Extra Judicial Killings and Disappearances*.^{[169][170]} Accepting the award, Assange said, "It is a reflection of the courage and strength of Kenyan civil society that this injustice was documented."^[171]

In 2010, Assange was awarded the [Sam Adams Award](#),^{[172][173]} Readers' Choice in *TIME* magazine's [Person of the Year](#) poll,^[121] and runner-up for Person of the Year.^[174] In April 2011 he was listed on the [Time 100](#) list of most influential people.^[175] An informal poll of editors at [Postmedia Network](#) named him the top newsmaker for the year after six out of 10 felt Assange had "affected profoundly how information is seen and delivered".^[176]

[Le Monde](#), one of the five publications to cooperate with WikiLeaks' publication of the recent document leaks, named him person of the year with fifty six percent of the votes in their online poll.^{[177][178][179]}

In February 2011, it was announced that Assange had been awarded the [Sydney Peace Foundation gold medal](#) by the Sydney Peace Foundation of the [University of Sydney](#) for his "exceptional courage and initiative in pursuit of human rights."^[180] There have been four recipients of the award in the foundation's fourteen year history: [Nelson Mandela](#); the 14th Dalai Lama, [Tenzin Gyatso](#); [Daisaku Ikeda](#); and Assange.^[180]

In June 2011, Assange was awarded the [Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism](#). The prize is awarded on an annual basis to journalists "whose work has penetrated the established version of events and told an unpalatable truth that exposes establishment propaganda, or 'official drivel'". The judges said, "WikiLeaks has been portrayed as a phenomenon of the hi-tech age, which it is. But it's much more. Its goal of justice through transparency is in the oldest and finest tradition of journalism."^[181]

Allegations of sexual molestation

Main article: [Swedish Judicial Authority v Julian Assange](#)

On 20 August 2010, [Swedish police](#) began an investigation into allegations concerning Assange's behaviour in separate sexual encounters involving two different women.^{[182][183]} Assange has said allegations of wrongdoing are "without basis",^[184] describing all the sexual encounters as consensual.^{[185][186]} In December 2010, Assange, then in Britain, learned that the Swedish authorities had issued a [European Arrest Warrant](#) (EAW) to extradite him to Sweden for questioning.

According to published reports, the charges Sweden has lodged against Assange involve two different women, neither of whom contacted the police until after they discovered they were both involved with him. Their initial intention was reportedly to force Assange to take an HIV test. There are four charges: that on August 14, 2010 he committed "unlawful coercion" when he held complainant 1 down with his body weight in a sexual manner; that he "sexually molested" complainant 1 when he had condom-less sex with her after she insisted that he use one; that he had condom-less sex with complainant 2 on the morning of August 17 while she was asleep; and that he "deliberately molested" complainant 1 on August 18, 2010 by pressing his erect penis against her body.^{[187][188]}

An extradition hearing took place on 7–8 and 11 February 2011 before the [City of Westminster Magistrates' Court](#) ^{[189][190]} when the extradition warrant was upheld. ^{[191][192][193][194]}

On 2 March 2011, his lawyers lodged papers at the High Court challenging the ruling to extradite Assange to Sweden. ^[195] After a hearing on 12 and 13 July 2011, the High Court reserved its judgment, and on 2 November 2011, dismissed his appeal. ^[196] On 5 December 2011 Assange's lawyers were granted permission to appeal to the Supreme Court, after the High Court certified that a point of law of general public importance, that ought to be considered by the Supreme Court, was involved in its decision. The certified question is whether a prosecutor can be a judicial authority. ^{[16][17]} Supreme Court has heard the appeal on 1 and 2 February 2012. ^[19] The court reserved its judgment, and its decision is expected within weeks. ^[20] Assange remains on conditional bail. ^{[195][197]}

Residency

Though an Australian citizen, Assange has not lived in Australia since leaving after beginning work on WikiLeaks. He did have a permanent address for several years ^[5] and lived for periods in Australia, Kenya, Tanzania and Germany. He began renting a house in Iceland on 30 March 2010, from which he and other activists, including [Birgitta Jónsdóttir](#), worked on the [Collateral Murder](#) video. ^[21]

For much of 2010, he was travelling around Europe, including the United Kingdom, Iceland, Sweden and Austria. On 4 November 2010, Assange told Swiss public television [TSR](#) that he was seriously considering seeking political asylum in neutral Switzerland and moving the operation of the WikiLeaks foundation there. ^[198] In December 2010, it was reported that U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland [Donald S. Beyer](#) had warned the Swiss government against offering asylum to Assange, citing the arrest warrant issued by Interpol. ^[199]

In late November 2010, [Kintto Lucas](#), the Deputy Foreign Minister of Ecuador, spoke about giving Assange residency with "no conditions... so he can freely present the information he possesses and all the documentation, not just over the Internet but in a variety of public forums". ^[200] Lucas believed that Ecuador may benefit from initiating a dialogue with Assange. ^[201] Foreign Minister [Ricardo Patiño](#) stated on 30 November that the residency application would "have to be studied from the legal and diplomatic perspective". ^[202] A few hours later, President [Rafael Correa](#) stated that WikiLeaks "committed an error by breaking the laws of the United States and leaking this type of information... no official offer was [ever] made." ^{[203][204]} Correa noted that Lucas was speaking "on his own behalf"; additionally, he will launch an investigation into possible ramifications Ecuador would suffer from the release of the cables. ^[204]

In a hearing at the [City of Westminster Magistrates' Court](#) on 7 December 2010, Assange identified a [post office box](#) as his address. When told by the judge that this information was not acceptable, he submitted "[Parkville, Victoria](#), Australia" on a sheet of paper. His lack of permanent address and nomadic lifestyle were cited by the judge as factors in denying bail. ^[205] He was ultimately released, in part because journalist [Vaughan Smith](#) offered to provide Assange with an address for bail during the extradition proceedings, Smith's Norfolk mansion, [Ellingham Hall](#). ^[206] He lived there for a year, then moved out "to an undisclosed location in December", 2011. ^[207]

Political and economic views

According to Assange, "It's not correct to put me in any one philosophical or economic camp, because I've learned from many. But one is American libertarianism, market libertarianism. So as far as markets are concerned I'm a libertarian, but I have enough expertise in politics and history to understand that a free market ends up as monopoly unless you force them to be free." ^[208]

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External links

- [Homepage of Julian Assange's web site iq.org](#) (at the [Internet Archive](#))
- [Julian Assange](#) at [TED Conferences](#)
- [Works by or about Julian Assange](#) in libraries ([WorldCat](#) catalog)
- [Works by Julian Assange](#) at [Project Gutenberg](#)
- [Julian Assange](#) collected news and commentary at [The Guardian](#)
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- [Profile: Wikileaks founder Julian Assange](#) at [BBC News](#)
- [Interview with Julian Assange on release of Afghan war files – 1 August 2010](#) [Russia Today](#) via YouTube
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- [Julian Assange](#) interviewed by [John Pilger](#) on [New Statesman](#) January 2011
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