

UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT

Date: 20 December 2018

Event: Visit of German MPs @HeikeHaensel & @SevimDagdelen to Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London.



Plus:

OFFICIAL STATEMENT made after the visit

- HH & SD arrive: https://youtu.be/4YiynIc_KGg?t=1h33m32s
- Enter Embassy: https://youtu.be/4YiynIc_KGg?t=1h37m41s
- Statements outside: <https://youtu.be/r3DOkcPeb18?t=5m12s>



TRANSCRIPT (Unofficial version)

STATEMENT: @SevimDagdelen

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebI8?t=6m16s>

"Julian Assange's situation is extremely precarious and inhumane because, still, 80% of his time he is isolated. So he can just get some visitors from 9:30 in the morning until 5:30, if I can remember correctly, so most of the time he's still isolated."

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebI8?t=6m45s>

"We wanted to talk with Julian Assange [about] some political issues in the European Union, and the thing is Julian Assange can speak but he cannot talk with us, or [rather] he can talk but he cannot speak on issues. And this is another problem Julian Assange is facing with his political asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy, and it's a very singular problem.

I have never seen such a problem and such a case in the world: that someone who is getting political asylum from a different country is not allowed to do his own political opinion on issues, and to talk about this. And this is against international law. It has to be stopped. The freedom of expression, the freedom of political opinion, is a human right and it's a part of international law, and everyone has to respect this international law."

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebI8?t=8m04s>

"Another fact is that what makes this case very singular is that there is no other publisher or editor in the Western world who has been arbitrarily detained. It's just Julian Assange. And it's a shame for us, for the Western countries, for the Western world, who have got these so-called Western values about human rights and human rights issues.

That's why we talk, of course, and demand that this case has to be solved: that no publisher, no editor, no journalist is detained because of publishing the truth. Making public war crimes is not a crime. And what is a crime is doing or ordering war crimes, but not publishing it and reporting it."

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebI8?t=9m08s>

"The fact that he is arbitrarily detained is not an opinion of those who support him. It is actually [the] opinion of the United Nations. The United Nations said that his detention is against international law and it's against human rights.

So therefore we, as German Parliamentarians, we are very afraid about these rumours we're getting about the Ecuadorian authorities, the administration, that

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they want to get rid of Julian Assange; that they want to end his political asylum.

We urge the Ecuadorian authorities to still keep this achievement alive: to say that Ecuador was, in a time where other Western countries didn't want to stick up for the human rights and political asylum for journalists, publishers and editors, that Ecuador did this. And this was a great achievement. It was good prestige for Ecuador, and I hope the new authorities in Ecuador, they will still keep this line - to protect people from persecution, to protect people from extraterritorial persecution, and to protect them against violations of freedom of speech, freedom of press."

<https://youtu.be/r3DOkcPebl8?t=11m03s>

"And of course, as German Parliamentarians, we also are ashamed that the German Parliament or the German government still didn't give the political asylum and protection for Julian Assange or other journalists who are in danger in Europe or in the world."

STATEMENT: @HeikeHaensel

- <https://youtu.be/r3DOkcPebl8?t=11m24s>

"Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Myself also, I would like to first mention the isolation policy of the Ecuadorian embassy. Myself, I was trying from May [2018] on to get a permission to visit Julian Assange. Now, it was possible, [but] I waited more than seven months in order to get this permission. And, of course, still he is the subject of isolation policy and during this eight months of total isolation he was not able to receive visitors. Neither getting access to internet or phone calls, mobile phone, and so on. It was full isolation and this is really violating fundamental rights.

The same way that he is suffering from censorship. He is gagged. That means this is a very tough violation of freedom of expression of Julian Assange. He is not able to speak publicly what he wants to say, what he's thinking of. And I think this is really a singular case in a member state, still a member state of the European Union, Great Britain."

- <https://youtu.be/r3DOkcPebl8?t=12m49s>

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"Of course, we are also very much concerned that there could be a release, end of this political asylum, by the Ecuadorian government, the government of Ecuador, and the end of this case could be the extradition to the United States.

Therefore, we call upon our own government, all European governments, member states of the European Union, that they should prevent any - *any* - case of extradition to the United States, and we ask for the rejection of the attempt of the US administration that they now try to get US laws settled here in the European Union.

That means that they try to censor journalists writing in Europe and this, I think, this case must be fully rejected by the EU member states.

We do have similar cases in Turkey. We are facing similar cases with President Erdoğan who tried to charge German journalists and editors and so on while criticising President Erdoğan. So this is a similar case, that the Trump administration tries to persecute, in a cross-border way, trying to organise a cross-border prosecution of Julian Assange - extraterritorial prosecution - and we fully resist this, and we ask our governments also to reject these attempts of the US administration."

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebl8?t=14m38s>

"And we ask for the international community, all supporters of Julian Assange, to show now strong solidarity in order to prevent the extradition to the United States. This is our main goal. We want to see Julian Assange as a free journalist who can keep on with his work as he did before. We have to say "thank you" to Julian Assange. He is one of the most important whistleblowers and we ask for international protection for whistleblowers generally, and in the special case of Julian Assange.

Therefore we also call upon the United Nations to start a new campaign for protection of whistleblowers. And we will keep on now campaigning for solidarity with Julian Assange in order to see him in a safe country.

Thank you very much."

STATEMENT: @HeikeHaensel (In German)

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebl8?t=16m08s>

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Wir setzen uns dafür ein, dass Julian Assange als einer der wichtigsten internationalen Whistleblower und anerkannter Journalist in Freiheit arbeiten kann, dass er seine Arbeit normal durchführen kann.

Journalismus ist kein Verbrechen. Er hat dazu beigetragen, dass international viele Kriegsverbrechen bezüglich des Iraks und Afghanistan aufgedeckt wurden.

Er hat als Journalist gearbeitet und deshalb setzen wir uns dafür ein, dass er auch in Freiheit weiter arbeiten kann und nicht an die Vereinigten Staaten ausgeliefert wird und das fordern wir auch von der europäischen Union und den Vereinten Nationen, dass sie sicherstellen, es braucht internationalen Schutz für diese Whistleblower, einschließlich Julian Assange.

@SevimDagdelen (in German)

- <https://youtu.be/r3DOkcPebI8?t=17m02s>

Die Situation von Julian Assange ist sehr prekär und sie ist auch inhuman, weil sie gegen das international Recht verstösst. Das haben auch die Gremien der Vereinten Nationen festgestellt, dass die willkürliche Haft, der Freiheitsentzug von Julian Assange gegen das internationale Recht ist und forderten seine Freilassung.

Wir sind in grösster Sorge als Parlamentarier hier angereist, in grösster Sorge über die Gesundheit und auch die Sicherheit von Julian Assange.

Wir müssen sagen, wir sind sehr sehr froh, dass wir einen, über einen Besuch sehr freudigen Julian Assange getroffen haben, der in den letzten acht Monaten absolut isoliert worden ist von Ecuador, was auch gegen internationales Recht ist. Isolierung ist ein Verstoss gegen internationales Recht. Julian Assange kann aber leider auch als politisch anerkannter Flüchtling keine Meinung äussern und das macht seine Situation natürlich schwer und auch prekär.

Wir bleiben dabei. Das Öffentlich machen von Kriegsverbrechen ist kein Verbrechen.

Julian Assange verdient den Friedensnobelpreis für die mutigen Taten die er getan hat, statt einen Prozess oder eine extraterritoriale Verfolgung durch die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika.

Deshalb fordern wir einen sicheren Schutz für Julian Assange und ein sicheres Geleit, damit er in ein Land seiner Wahl ausreisen, kann wo er in Gesundheit und auch in Sicherheit leben kann.

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QUESTION TIME

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebI8?t=18m52s>

Q: Besides being here and contributing to Julian Assange's cause, are there any more practical steps you are able to take to help contribute to his release - which he's been asking for with safe passage, or some guarantees from the UK officials?

A (HH): Of course we wrote already [a letter](#) with more than 35 or 40 MPs from national parliaments and the European Parliament addressing the Secretary General of the United Nations and the different national governments in order to find an international solution on the case of Julian Assange.

And we will continue to build a network of MPs in the European Union in order to support his court cases - in Ecuador, but also here, in the European Union - in order to protect him. So we will continue on the Parliamentary level and, of course, we will campaign publicly.

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebI8?t=20m01s>

A (SD): I was the first Parliamentarian who visited Julian Assange in September 2012, and Julian Assange wasn't meant to be here so long.

We have to get a solution on this case. And this solution must guarantee his health and his security. And that's why we will take another steps. In the last six years we have done some initiatives, but as long as we can see that the attention and the problematic case is not getting the solution it deserves - for a Western country, which is calling so often about the Western values in other parts of the world.

So we have to get the solution on this issue.

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebI8?t=20m56s>

Q: What do you think the solution is? Who is supposed to take the next step here?

A (SD): Well, the United Kingdom is actually the one who has to take the steps. But my problem is that the United Kingdom is taking the false steps, like it was against the United Nations.

The United Kingdom government tried to appeal the UN [UNWGAD] decision, but they lost. And still they are not accepting this UN decision, and this has to be

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stopped. They have to . . . I mean it's a member of the United Nations. It has a seat in the Security Council. In my point of view the United Kingdom is [obliged] to respect the international law, and the international rights of someone like Julian Assange.

And that's why the UK has to take the measures, now, to bring it to a solution which is in the frame of international law, and not in the frame of the US administration, who is against international law, and against actually the US law. I mean, against the First Amendment.

They are taking [away] measures, like the protection of journalists, and the freedom of speech, and the freedom of press. So we have to actually protect them from themselves, not to violate their First Amendment.

- <https://youtu.be/r3DOkcPebI8?t=22m34s>

Q: Would you mind saying something about how you found Julian? His health, his general demeanour?

Q: And perhaps, John [John Shipton, Julian's father] - would you like to say something as well?

A (JS): I think it's time for this torment of Julian to end, rather than constantly increase, now that the isolation has been going on for eight months.

And as you could be expect, anybody who is isolated from their children and their family - Julian's sister, two brothers, mother - suffers. And suffers terribly. So it's timely to end this ceaseless, increasing torment of a man who's been charged with nothing at all.

Q: How often have you managed to visit him?

A (JS): I come every Christmas for two weeks, and I like to come on his birthday in July, mid-year.

Q: And how did you find him today?

A (JS): Today, he was delighted to see the two Parliamentarians and myself, but that happens rarely.

Q: But his health? There's been some concern about his health.

A (JS): His health is declining, as you could expect after eight years of ceaseless, ongoing stress, court cases, no sunlight, [and now] restricted visitation, no telecommunications, no telephone, no friends, only lawyers. That's...

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A (HH): I mean it's still [an] open question whether he will be able to receive visitors on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve due to the fact these are non-working days, holidays, and in the Protocol it is said that visitors are only allowed during working days. So, this Protocol is quite strict and it's really still a kind of isolation policy, and it's very much and very closely linked to his status of political asylee. And this concerns us very much and therefore, of course, we appeal to the government of Ecuador to keep on with his status of political asylee and refer and act according to international law and fundamental human rights. And this is our strong appeal.

And concerning the responsibility of the British government, they also do have to act according to international law and therefore it is said that it is not allowed to extradite a political asylee. He is still acknowledged as a political asylee.

Therefore we ask for a kind of international solution and a guarantee that he won't be extradited to the United States. This is the most important question we raise here, and we call upon all governments to work into this direction.

- <https://youtu.be/r3DOkcPebI8?t=25m53s>

Q: [In German] Hat sich denn der Herr Assange Ihnen gegenüber geäußert, wie es um seinen Status steht, fürchtet er jetzt von Ecuador aus der Botschaft rausgeworfen zu werden?

A (HH): [In German] Ja, es gab ja einige Presseberichte über Verhandlungen zwischen der ecuadorianischen Regierung und der US Regierung über eine mögliche Auslieferung von Julian Assange. Es gab alle möglichen Pressemeldungen zu Deals. Insofern ist es nicht ausgeschlossen und insofern fürchtet er natürlich auch eine mögliche Verhaftung und daran angekoppelt eine Auslieferung an die Vereinigten Staaten.

Q: [In German] Könnte das auch unmittelbar bevorstehen oder gibt es eine zeitliche Frist ?

A (HH): [In German] Über die zeitliche.. über die Zeit ist glaube ich nicht.. können wir nicht

Q: [In German] Es könnte jeden Moment passieren

A (HH): [In German] Es könnte jeden Moment passieren, aber theoretisch..

A (SD): [In German] Es ist akut.

A (HH): [In German] ..sehr schnell passieren. Und deswegen sind wir auch hier, um anzukündigen, dass wir unsere Solidaritätsaktivitäten auch hier vor Ort

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verstärken werden. Es braucht die internationale Öffentlichkeit für diesen Fall - und zwar jetzt.

A (SD): [In German at 27:08] Die Gefahr ist akut und insofern ist jetzt auch Solidarität gefragt, nicht nur auf der britischen Ebene, sondern eben auch einer internationale Ebene. Wir werden auf jeden Fall unseren parlamentarischen Abgeordneten Kollegen in Deutschland, aber auch über Deutschland hinaus, ihnen sagen das wir erwarten und uns freuen würden, wenn sie sich dem Fall Julian Assange widmen und hier Solidarität zeigen.

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebl8?t=27m45s>

A (SD): What we will do concrete[ly] in the next time is also to encourage more Parliamentarians - more Parliamentarians in the UK, in Germany, and outside of Germany in Europe - to come and show solidarity with Julian Assange.

And I really want to emphasise on this. The case of Julian Assange is not a case about his person, and his character, and his personality. It's a case about our approach to the freedom of press, the freedom of speech, and freedom of opinion. The Western approach on these issues.

Are we allowing editors and publishers to make war crimes and illegal - *illegal* - activities of intelligence agencies - are we allowing them to publish it, or not? And this is the point of all these cases, called Julian Assange or Chelsea Manning or whatever.

And this is why everyone who is a democrat and believes [in] and protects the freedom of rights to speak, to print, or the freedom of speech, everyone is encouraged to show solidarity with Julian Assange.

Showing solidarity with Julian Assange means showing solidarity with our fundamental human rights. And this is why we are going to encourage more Parliamentarians to show up in London in the embassy.

- <https://youtu.be/r3D0kcPebl8?t=29m28s>

Q: [Inaudible]

A (JS): I don't know the answer to that question. Very tense question.

Q: Are there any indications he might consider eventually stepping out and risk it, or is he committed to stay in there until he gets those guarantees [inaudible]?

A (JS): I don't know what he's thinking. I can't speculate.

Q: Have you given him any advice on his case at all?

A (JS): No, I don't give advice. I'm just here to show support.

Q: So you'd normally visit him on Christmas Day, would you John?

A (JS): We've spent Christmas day together for the last six years.

Q: Are you saying that might not happen this year?

A (JS): This year it looks tenuous.

A (HH): It was not clear yet. He's asking for it.

Q: [Inaudible]

A (JS): They want to come and see their brother, and sister complains all the time, children complain. They'd just like to see their father just casually, rather than come all the way from Australia.

ALL: Thank you very much.

End of this session [30:43]

OFFICIAL STATEMENT made after the visit

Mitglieder des Deutschen Bundestages (Members of the German Bundestag):

German MPs **Heike Hänsel** and **Sevim Dagdelen**, deputy chairwomen of the parliamentary group DIE LINKE in the German parliament, visited today publisher and WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange in London. After the meeting in the Ecuadorian embassy, they said:

"Dear representatives of the media,

1. First of all, we would like to thank the Embassy of Ecuador for making this meeting possible for us, and of course Julian Assange for agreeing to a visit under these difficult conditions.
2. We have conveyed to Julian Assange the solidarity greetings of the Left Party and the solidarity of the many supporters from Germany. The people in Germany and throughout the world are indebted to Mr Assange. He has contributed to bringing to light the war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan and the illegal activities of the secret services, particularly the CIA. He has opened our eyes to how dirty and bloody these wars were and are, and how much we have been deceived by our governments. He deserves our solidarity.
3. Julian Assange was very pleased with our visit. This is the first visit by Members since March after months of suspension. We would very much like more colleagues from other countries to come to London and work for a humanitarian solution to this situation. As parliamentarians, we should ask our governments to act. Unfortunately, the German Government has so far done nothing to find a solution. We have regretted this to Julian Assange. Also, we call on fellow MPs in the UK and across Europe to work for a humanitarian solution.
4. The fight for an end to the imprisonment of Julian Assange is at the same time a fight against the attempt of the US government and legal authorities to get hold of a journalist in Europe who has published in Europe. We oppose this extraterritorial political persecution across international borders. We cannot accept that the USA should enforce its laws against whistleblowers in Europe as well.
5. We are very pleased that Julian Assange is still optimistic and in good spirits, even though he has been in such a difficult situation for more than six years. We agree that the British and Ecuadorian governments can find a solution and provide diplomatic assurances against extradition to the US.

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If the Ecuadorian authorities end the embassy asylum, Julian Assange could be arrested in the UK and extradited to the US, where he would face a long prison sentence or even the death penalty.

If someone is to be extradited to a country where he is facing a death sentence because of his political activities, it is undoubtedly sufficient under international law to grant him refugee status. Article 33 of the Geneva Convention expressly prohibits States Parties from expulsion or rejection of a refugee across the borders of territories "where his life or freedom would be threatened because of his political convictions".

We would therefore like to thank the Ecuadorian government for granting political asylum to Julian Assange in its embassy in 2012 to defend freedom of speech and freedom of the press. We trust that the new government under President Lenín Moreno will continue to ensure the health and safety of Julian Assange in embassy asylum.

Ladies and gentlemen,

6. Julian Assange and Wikileaks made history. We have a moral obligation to prevent war crimes and uncover war crimes by informing. This is what Assange and Wikileaks have done. And for that Assange deserves a prize, no political persecution and no trial.

Our next steps in this case will include strengthening the international solidarity of parliamentarians with Assange and thus the freedom of the press. Because this is not about the person of Assange. This is about the right to publish information in the public interest. It is about our democracy. Therefore, 36 MPs from nearly a dozen European countries have written to U.N. General Secretary António Guterres, British Prime Minister Theresa May and Ecuadorian President Lenín Moreno.

7. We call on German Federal Foreign Minister Heiko Maas to show his attitude and to stand up for the health and safety of Julian Assange. By revealing secret documents, Julian Assange made public crimes committed by the US Army in the Iraq war, from which the then SPD-led Federal Government under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder had also distanced itself.

Thank you very much for your attention."

London, 20th December 2018
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