

# Avoiding Assange

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HELP ENLIGHTEN YOUR FELLOWS. BE SURE TO PASS THIS ON. SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON IT.

**Jim Kavanagh**

April 25, 2019

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[dropcap]T[/dropcap>he United States government is seeking to extradite and prosecute Julian Assange for one reason: to punish him for publishing true and embarrassing information about US crimes and intimidate every journalist in the world from doing so again.

If the US government succeeds in doing this, it will strike a devastating blow to the fundamental elements of democracy throughout the world—the freedom of the press and the related ability of citizens to know what their governments are doing.



I say “throughout the world” because It's important to understand that the US government in this case is asserting its prosecutorial authority over someone who is not an American and whose journalistic activity took place outside the United States. The United States is demonstrating its ability to get a foreign government to arrest and extradite journalists who are neither Americans nor citizens of its own country and send them off to the United States to face charges under American law. It's not only a brazen attempt to quash press freedoms; it's a further extension of the United States' arrogant assertion of extra-territorial—indeed, universal—jurisdiction of its laws.

As Jonathan Cook [says](#), those who accept this have “signed off on the right of the US authorities to seize any foreign journalist, anywhere in the world, and lock him or her out of sight. They opened the door to a new, special form of rendition for journalists.”

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Whether anybody says it out loud or thinks it explicitly, and no matter how slight it might be right now, the sight of Julian Assange being dragged out of the Ecuadorian Embassy in handcuffs is already working in the minds of journalists throughout the world, engendering some pause or consideration about what's worth the risk to report on. It cannot not be so. The consummation of his extradition and prosecution, the sight of him disappearing into the American prison system, will radically change that calculus of risk for every journalist in the world. The minute after sentence is pronounced, every journalist and citizen will open their eyes in a world where a lot of important things they could expect to reveal and see a minute ago will now stay hidden. And they will know it. At that moment, all the bullshit irrelevancies and avoidance mechanisms will instantly dissipate, and it will be clear to everyone what the only issue always was. Too late.

It's incumbent on everyone who claims to value free speech and freedom of the press to do everything in their power to prevent the United States government from getting away with this. That requires focusing one's own discourse and one's interlocutors' and audience's attention on the core issue.

Unfortunately, for seven years, pundits throughout the political spectrum have been assiduously avoiding exactly that, and have instead been blowing smoke, insisting on diverting attention from the core issue of the USG's attack on journalism via its attempt to imprison Assange. They have denied it was really happening and characterized it as an artifact of Assange's paranoia, and/or they insisted that *something else* was the real issue, the thing we should really be focussed on and concerned about.

One would think that the actual fact of an indictment and extradition demand from the United States would put an end to that diversionary discourse, but unfortunately that smoke is

still blowing, from all the same lips.

And most of that smoke is wafting out of the garbage fire fueled by one accelerant: "Assange is an asshole."

At this point, there are two types of discourse about Julian Assange.

There's A: "Assange may be an asshole, but that's irrelevant. The USG is not going to drag him here, prosecute him, and put him in prison for a very long time for being an asshole. The USG is doing that to punish him for revealing embarrassing truths about its crimes, and to intimidate every other journalist who might think about doing that again. That's the only relevant issue here, and we are obliged to focus our energies on it and on preventing that from happening."

Then there's B (a position roundly [skewered](#) by C. J. Hopkins): "Assange is a real asshole. He's a dirty, smelly-cat, skateboarding, shit-smearing rapist and Russian agent. Yeah, it may not be such a good idea for the USG to be prosecuting him, though it's such a minor charge and it's about hacking and not publishing secrets and not all that dangerous. And did I tell you what an asshole he is?! In the context of what's going on, I really want to make sure to detail for you day after day what an asshole he is. That's the important thing that you should know. He's such an asshole. And don't forget Russian agent! Have I mentioned that he's an asshole?"

These are two different discourses, which have, and are meant to have, *opposite* political effects. It's clear that people spreading each of these discourses spend their energy on, care about, and *are doing* different things, and really want their audience to care about and do different things. One group of people is defending Assange and encouraging its audience to defend him from USG prosecution; the other, while ostensibly distancing itself from the USG position, is in fact acting as the USG's *amicus curiae*, helping to prosecute Assange on

“other” charges, and encouraging its audience not to be concerned about what happens to him. Let’s not be fooled about this. Assange may be an asshole, but the people spreading the latter discourse are definitely scumbags.

The lies and diversions will not stop. But I do want to deconstruct two of the favorite deceptive and irrelevant cinders that becloud the eyes of those hesitant to see themselves as accomplices of the USG’s and the Trump administration’s war on a free press.

### **Held Harmless**

The first is the denial that the charge the USG has brought against Assange poses any threat to press freedom. The *New York Times* (NYT) practically [celebrates](#) it: “The administration has begun well by charging Mr. Assange with an indisputable crime”—that is, “not with publishing classified government information, but with stealing it, skirting – for now – critical First Amendment questions.”

Hey, if the NYT, publisher of the Pentagon Papers, whose own lawyer [warned](#) that “the prosecution of [Assange] would be a very, very bad precedent for publishers,” says that the charge against Assange is “well begun” and not critical to “First Amendment questions”—well, that’s going to be good enough to calm the fears of most liberals.

Indeed, according to the [Washington Post](#), [WaPo] not only is Julian Assange “not a free-press hero,” and not only is his prosecution “not the defeat for civil liberties of which his defenders mistakenly warn,” but his case can be considered “a victory for the rule of law.” That’s because “the indictment does not charge Assange with violating the Espionage Act.” Besides, “he is long overdue for personal accountability.”

**The issue isn’t whether Julian Assange will be prosecuted for sex-crime**

**allegations, for bail jumping, or for being an asshole. The only issue is whether he will be extradited to the US and sent to prison for decades for publishing true facts about US crimes around the world.**

Thus, the other iconic liberal journal, recently idealized by iconic liberal Hollywood (Spielberg-Hanks-Steep!) for its iconic liberal courage in publishing iconic liberal hero Daniel Ellsberg's thousands of stolen ("an indisputable crime") "Top Secret" national security documents, *The New York Times*, has issued its authoritative verdict. It has told its post-*The Post*, virtue-assured, iconic liberal audience that the prosecution of Julian Assange, who published Chelsea Manning's stolen documents—[not a single one](#) of which was classified "Top Secret" and most of which, including the *Collateral Murder* video, were not classified at all—is, again, something to *celebrate*. *No threat to civil liberties. Long overdue. Personal accountability and all. Well played, Mr. President.*

Meanwhile, Daniel Ellsberg—the real one, not the one in the movie—expresses quite another [opinion](#), in a voice that has earned its authority [with his emphasis]: "The truth is that EVERY attack now made on WikiLeaks and Julian Assange was made against me and the release of the Pentagon Papers at the time." But what does Meryl think?

Two little things here.

One, contrary to the NYT assertion, Julian Assange did not commit the "indisputable crime" of "stealing" classified government information, and *he is not charged with that*. Chelsea Manning committed that crime, and was prosecuted and convicted for it. Chelsea Manning downloaded classified and

unclassified government data *without any help from Julian Assange*. Manning did not get, and did not need, anyone's help to get "unauthorized access" to and "steal" information.

Nobody "hacked" into anything. Chelsea Manning had *authorized* access, had her own password, and downloaded tons of data *before* Assange was even in the picture. In fact, Manning first tried to give the data to the *NYT* and *WaPo*—'cause, you know, she, too, was still dreaming the iconic-liberal-hero-Pentagon-Papers dream. Only when they—out watching the movie, maybe—sent her to [voicemail](#) did she turn to Wikileaks, where the dream was not yet impossible.

So, contrary to the impression given by the iconic liberal papers of record, Julian Assange is not charged with "hacking" or helping Manning "hack" into a computer. He is not charged with doing anything that made it possible for Manning to get the information she gave to the American and the world public through Wikileaks.

The indictment charges Assange with trying (and failing) to help Manning decrypt ("crack") another user's password—not because Manning needed it to gain access, but because it might help conceal that it was she who was downloading data. Assange is accused of helping Manning cover her tracks. As Glenn Greenwald says, in his [piece](#) methodically making the point: "even if one accepts all of the indictment's claims as true, Assange was not trying to hack into document files to which Manning had no access, but rather trying to help Manning avoid detection as a source."

Of course, the government's theory of the crime will be that Assange's failed attempt to help Manning avoid detection in that way is an intrinsic and necessary part of Manning's "theft" of data itself.

In the abstract, it's not a ridiculous theory, because helping someone get away with it is undeniably *abetting* the commission

of the crime. In the context of journalism, it is also a *dangerous* theory. Because every journalist who receives classified information is, undeniably, abetting that crime. (Just as every journalist of any worth is a "hostile, non-state intelligence agent.")

If the iconic liberal press wants to cheer on the USG/Trump administration's prosecution of that action, as part of a "conspiracy" to "knowingly access a computer without authorization," it is cheering on an expansive definition of that charge to include, as Greenwald says, journalists' "ethical obligation to take steps to protect their sources from retaliation, which sometimes includes granting them anonymity and employing technical measures to help ensure that their identity is not discovered." It is cheering on the prosecution of any publisher in the future doing what the NYT and WaPo did with the Pentagon Papers.

It is also, we should all acknowledge, cheering on Donald Trump for undertaking precisely the criminalization of standard journalistic abetting of sources that, it is said, the Obama administration declined to pursue, on exactly the same evidence. If the NYT and WaPo are praising the Trump administration for its "well begun" and "long overdue" prosecution of Assange on this charge, they are implicitly, it should be pointed out explicitly, denouncing the Obama administration for its ill-advised failure to be as aggressively reactionary. That is how the iconic liberal media rolls.

Not to fear, I am sure the government will be successful in presenting its theory of this crime in the Eastern District of Virginia, known as the "Espionage Court." Ask [John Kiriakou](#) about Assange's chances there.

I am also sure that this will not be the only charge Julian Assange faces in that court. If you think that, after pursuing and demonizing him as a "terrorist" and "hostile non-state



intelligence" agent (for Russia yet!) for 9 years, the US government is going to be satisfied with a maximum five-year (out-in-three) sentence for Julian Assange, I have a bridge to sell you.

The moment he sets foot on US soil, Julian Assange will be hit with other charges—charges, probably under the Espionage Act, that carry long prison sentences. I know that, anyone who is not a child knows that, and the editors of the NYT and WaPo know that. When the editors of the NYT write that the government is: “skirting – *for now* – critical First Amendment questions,” they are telling you they know that.

This is another round of that cowardly game where liberal pundits pretend to believe in the professed objectives of the government so they can claim to be abetting its actions in innocent good faith, and when it all turns to shit they can say: “We didn’t know *that* was gonna happen!” and be all liberal-outraged at the danger to the un-skirted First Amendment.

The mainstream media will cover is asses on that now by parading legal analysts who point out that the extradition treaty with the UK does not allow additional charges to be added after extradition.

First of all, I’m sure Theresa May and all sorts of UK pols and pundits will be really mad and stamp their feet if the US government somehow reneges on that. So Trump, Bolton, and Pompeo wouldn’t dare.

But here’s how I know, and know that the NYT and WaPo know, that the government will bring more charges against Assange: The lawyer who represented the NYT in the Pentagon Papers case, whom they all know very well, and who, we know, knows what he’s talking about, tells us so.

In his article entitled, “[The Indictment of Assange is a Snare and a Delusion](#),” James Goodale, explains how the USG has

written into the present indictment the legal justification for bringing new charges without violating the extradition treaty. The treaty—surprise, surprise—makes an exception for new charges “based on the same facts as the offense for which extradition was granted.” While the indictment does not *charge* Assange under the Espionage Act, it does lay out a set of facts that predicate a case for conspiracy under the Act, which it mentions explicitly—per Goodale, on Page 5 of the indictment, referring to Title 18 U.S. Code, Sections 793(c) and 793(e).

As Goodale says: “The indictment is...a snare and a delusion...Once [Assange] is here, he will be hit, no doubt, with multiple charges.”

No doubt. A done deal. And all on the legal up-and-up. Theresa won't even have to stress her sensible shoes. Though I'm sure, along with the NYT and WaPo editorial boards, she'll say something like “We didn't foresee that. But it is within the law”

But there is not a chance, not a scintilla of a shred of a possibility, that the editors of the NYT and WaPo, and of the major television networks, do not know what James Goodale, and now you and I, know about the inevitability of the USG bringing more charges against Assange. They are deliberately deceiving you when they pretend that they don't.

In fact, an ABC [report](#) suggests that other, “death penalty” charges *were already made*, or were at least “on the table” against Assange.

The Ecuadorian government has been working with the UK government for over a year, and with the US government for six months—through the two countries' ambassadors in Germany—to craft a deal that would enable them to eject Assange without looking too villainous. And the single sticking point of that was the death penalty. U.S. Ambassador to Germany, Richard

Grenell, "one of President Donald Trump's closest envoys in Europe," eventually got Rod Rosenstein to agree to take the death penalty "off the table," and Grenell then made a verbal pledge to Ecuador.

The negotiation process and timing presented in this account indicate that a death penalty charge was definitely on the table, and only taken off recently and reluctantly.

Furthermore, the telephone game of passing on an indirect, second-hand, "verbal pledge" through Trump's pal, combined with the fact that the DOJ will "not confirm that the U.S. agreed to take any sentence off the table," does not inspire confidence in the durability of this "pledge." Lenin Moreno may be the one stamping his feet in disapproval, after depositing the \$4 billion the US arranged for him to get from the IMF.

At any rate, everyone who is not a child knows that, if Julian Assange is extradited to the United States, different charges with stiffer penalties will be added, and he will spend at least twenty, and probably all the remaining, years of his life in prison. As John Kiriakou says, from experience: "No matter what happens, no matter what the charges, Julian cannot and will not get a fair trial in the Eastern District of Virginia."

### **Swedish Victims Unit**

The other deliberately deceptive diversion, an especially alluring bait for liberals, is the infamous Swedish case. This is being resurrected in an oddly pernicious way in the UK, where the battle over what happens to Julian Assange and any possible independent media is being decided. There, a multi-party coterie of MPs and peers is leading a campaign, with an open letter to the present and shadow Home Secretaries, [urging](#) them to "do everything you can...to ensure" that Assange be extradited to Sweden, "in the event Sweden makes an

extradition request.” This campaign has been a great success, and “extradition to Sweden” has become the main theme and demand of the British liberal commentariat regarding the Assange case.

It might strike one as a little odd that there should be a furious political campaign to pressure the British government to honor an extradition request that has not been made. The signatories of the letter express no concern—“we make no assessment”—about whether the UK should honor the extradition demand that *has* been made and is actually in process, that of the United States. But the signatories definitely assess, in its absence, that the non-existent Swedish extradition request is valid, and that, just in case it appears, the UK government must pledge in advance to “give every assistance to Sweden” in honoring it.

Why? Well, clearly the letter writers stand in a different relation, and assume their audience stands in a different relation, to the issues involved in the actual U.S. versus the hypothetical Swedish extradition request. Thus, they feel comfortable flatly expressing no interest at all in the inevitable and terrible consequences that would result from honoring the U.S. extradition, while insisting, regarding the presumptive issue of a Swedish extradition, that “We must send a strong message of the priority the UK has in tackling sexual violence and the seriousness with which such allegations are viewed.” On a 1-10 scale of what issues are worth assessing, Sweden’s imagined interrogation of Assange for sexual allegations gets a 10, the US’s actual drive to imprison Assange for revealing war crimes is set at a firm 0. It’s a discourse in which the concerns about US extradition *disappear*.

To be clear, about what’s being done behind the “sex crime allegation” smoke, they explicitly *do not oppose* extradition to the US, and do not urge anyone to do so. They are trying to replace “no extradition to the US” in the public discourse

with “extradition to Sweden”—which ends up meaning extradition to the US anyway. The purpose of this rhetorical rigamarole is, by getting everyone to think or do nothing about it, to surreptitiously but effectively *support extradition to the U.S.* It permits politicians and the public to support it by allowing it, while thinking/telling themselves they are supporting something else.

Let's not think and talk and do something about Julian Assange being extradited to and imprisoned in the United States, which is actually about to happen. That would require us to make a fight we really don't want to wage against our government, based on our professed free-speech, free-press principles that we really don't want to protect for a guy we've ~~been trained~~ come to loathe.

Let's instead think and talk and do something about the imaginary alternative of Assange being extradited and questioned in Sweden. That will confirm our virtuous seriousness about sexual assault allegations and wash our hands of the stains that would come—and we are implicitly admitting we know would come—from delivering him into the hands of the U.S. government/Trump administration's prison system. *Let Sweden do that!* We make no assessment about it.

As Jonathan Cook [demonstrates](#), the British Guardian-liberal commentariat is now firmly committed to promoting that diversionary discourse: “In other words, the public conversation in the U.K, ..., is going to be about who has first dibs on Assange...So, the concern is not that Assange is facing rendition to the U.S. It is that the U.S. claim might ‘overshadow’ an outstanding legal case in Sweden.”

It's the epitome of an avoidance mechanism; it substitutes in people's minds a non-existent problematic, which they can be more comfortable thinking about and acting upon, for the actual problem and decision they face.

A principal target of this campaign by those in the UK is, of course, Jeremy Corbyn and his left Labourites. Corbyn, who may become Prime Minister and have the real power to stop Assange's extradition, came out of the gate, on April 11<sup>th</sup>, with a very strong and clear statement:: "The extradition of Julian Assange to the US for exposing evidence of atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan should be opposed by the British government."

This statement was reinforced by being embedded in a tweet that includes a clip of the *Collateral Murder* video, in which his shadow Home Secretary, Diane Abbot reminds us that, in that incident, the US "killed 18 civilians and two Reuters journalists" and that "Julian Assange is not being pursued to protect US National Security. He is being pursued because he has exposed wrongdoing by US administrations and their military forces."

*The extradition of Julian Assange to the US for exposing evidence of atrocities in Iraq and Afghanistan should be opposed by the British government.[pic.twitter.com/CxTUrOfkHt](https://pic.twitter.com/CxTUrOfkHt)*

– Jeremy Corbyn (@jeremycorbyn) April 11, 2019

For the many partners of US imperialism scattered across the spectrum of British politics, this kind of strong, simple, and direct refusal of the US's extradition order—especially by a man and woman who may form a government—cannot be allowed to stand. On the other hand, it so powerfully echoes the disgust so many Britons feel about US imperialism that it makes it hard for the ostensibly leftist politicians and commentators to come out and say directly, "We must not oppose the US extradition."

So, a "left" reason must be conjured up to steer Corbyn and

Abbot away from their clear and explicit rejection of the US extradition request and into that murkier discourse where concerns about actual US extradition disappear, and “no extradition to the US” is replaced with “extradition to Sweden.” ‘Cause nobody wants to be soft on sex crimes.

And the pressure on Jeremy Corbyn has worked. He now [says](#) Julian Assange “must answer” sexual assault allegations if Sweden decides to re-open their investigation.

*Jeremy Corbyn says Julian Assange 'must answer' allegations of rape and sexual assault if Sweden decides to re-open their investigation into claims made by a woman in 2010.*

Read more here: <https://t.co/VpSjtdz9nmpic.twitter.com/qahkIsulh6>

– ITV News (@itvnews) [April 13, 2019](#)

This is Corbyn, on April 13, acceding to the demand of the letter that was sent on April 12<sup>th</sup> and reinforced by a tsunami of pressure from the British media, to *change the subject: Yes, OK, the important thing to talk about is the hypothetical Swedish extradition over sex allegations, not the actual American extradition for exposing war crimes.*

Repeating, again, the strange insistence that the hypothetical is more urgent than the actual, that everyone *must* take a position on what the UK *must* do *if* Sweden does something it hasn't.

The point of this campaign, the reason the letter was put out the day after his tweet, was to get that statement from Jeremy Corbyn. The present volatility in British politics makes it quite possible that there will soon be a general election, and quite possible that Corbyn will win it—all before Assange's

extradition case plays out in British courts. It was very important to get Corby on record saying: "the British government must extradite Assange to Sweden."

The British imperialist poodles are laying out the plan B in the case Corbyn becomes Prime Minister. It is very unlikely that Sweden will reopen their Assange investigation, but the message is being sent to Swedish poodles *and* the US big dog: *If he does become PM, we've already arranged a way out. We've created a political frame which allows Corbyn to keep his word not to allow direct British extradition to the US, while forcing him to allow extradition to Sweden (from which Assange will immediately be passed on to the US). In that circumstance, Sweden, at the behest of the US and UK, will obediently play its assigned role, re-open the investigation and demand extradition. Corbyn has already complied. He has been played. In two days.*

We might even see in this discourse the British liberal imperialists' not-so-subtle plea to Sweden, whether or not Corbyn is elected: *Please, reopen the damn investigation and demand that we extradite Assange to you!* Knowing full well Sweden would onwardly extradite him to the US. It's UK *Guardian* lefties, caught between the popular disgust with US imperialism and their own toadying commitment to it, sending a message to Sweden: *Don't make us be the bad guys here. You started this. You end it.*

Of course, the real point here, which the advocates of this line are *pretending* to miss and energetically trying to disappear from everyone's line of sight, is that Sweden is no more interested in prosecuting Assange for his alleged sexual offense than the UK is for his bail jumping. The sex allegation from Sweden, like the bail jumping allegation in the UK, is just a doorway to his extradition to the United States.

It may make it easier for UK and US liberals to swallow the



extradition of Assange if it's slathered in "sex crime" rather than "bail jumping" dressing. But whatever pretext it's done behind, that's the endgame for the UK *and* Sweden. Either you accept that's the case, as Assange and his legal team have been saying for years, or, in the face of the irrefutable fact of the American extradition request, you continue to deny it. Really, does anyone—does Jeremy Corbyn or a single one of the signatories of that British letter—think the USG/Trump administration would *not* demand extradition from Sweden? Or that Sweden would *not* comply? What mental gymnastics does it take to make the inevitability of that disappear from your mind? "Let's pretend!"

This is a desperate attempt by Assange-haters who want to maintain some leftist credibility to revive a specious smear that is irrefutably belied by the reality of the American indictment and extradition demand: that Assange sought Asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in order to "flee" sexual allegations, to "escape Swedish Justice."

I will not attempt to judge the allegations that were made against Assange in Sweden. The specifics of those allegations, which have undergone a number of permutations, and the peculiarities of Swedish law, which can be misleading to Americans, make for a rat's nest of sexual and political complications. The more you look into it, the more you are struck by how banal, confused, and sad the incidents in question are.

I share the [opinion](#) of Katrin Axelsson and Lisa Longstaff of Women Against Rape that "the pursuit of Assange is political" and "the allegations against him are a smokescreen behind which a number of governments are trying to clamp down on WikiLeaks for having audaciously revealed to the public their secret planning of wars and occupations with their attendant rape, murder and destruction." You can find comprehensive accounts that will help you make up your mind [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#).

I'll point out three crucial things to know in the present context, which are usually presented in deceptively fallacious ways.

First, of all, Assange is not, and never was, charged with a crime in Sweden. No decision to prosecute him was ever taken. The British letter itself recognizes this, speaking of the hope that "the formal investigation ... can be concluded and, *if appropriate, a charge can be made.*" It was, in the prosecutor's [language](#), a "preliminary investigation." Assange was wanted *for questioning*, and the Swedish government demanded his apprehension and extradition *for that purpose*, not to bring him to trial.

Second, Julian Assange was always available for questioning by Swedish prosecutors. He appeared voluntarily for questioning in Sweden, after which he was told he was free to leave the country. He and his lawyers always said he was available for questioning by Swedish prosecutors in London, via satellite (options that were standard practice), or in Sweden, if Sweden would assure him that he would not be extradited to the U.S. It was the British Crown Protection Service (CPS) that [dissuaded](#) the Swedes from coming to London to question Assange early on, in 2010 and 2011. And, when "Swedish authorities were eager to give up the case" and "drop extradition proceedings" in 2012-13, it was the British who pressured them to keep it going, with a CPS lawyer [exclaiming](#): "'Don't you dare get cold feet!!!"

Third, the Swedish prosecutor *did* [interview](#) Assange about the last remaining allegation in 2016 in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, without any extradition, as she always could have. (The investigation into other allegations was [dropped](#) in 2015.) Assange submitted to the Swedish prosecutor's insistence that the questioning take place without his lawyer present. After that questioning the investigation was [dropped](#). No criminal charges were filed; no decision to prosecute him was ever made.

What's quite clear in all this, although made to disappear from consideration and appear as its opposite, is that Julian Assange was never trying to "escape Swedish justice"; he was, as his lawyer, Jennifer Robinson says (in a Sky News [interview](#) with Sophy Ridge that I urge everyone to watch), "escaping American *injustice*." As Robinson points out, if Assange had gone to the Ecuadorian embassy to flee the Swedish charges, he would have left the Ecuadorian embassy when they were dropped. But, of course, it wasn't those charges he was trying to avoid. Assange's one consistent concern in all this, his reason for seeking and [being granted](#) *political* asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy, was to avoid being extradited to the US, by Sweden or the UK. He had, and was right to have, a fear of that.

There is an obvious fault in the logic of people who continue to push the "Assange was fleeing sex crime allegations" line, which they somehow never see. They say Assange is responsible for not confronting sex crime allegations because he would not go to Sweden; they never say Swedish authorities are responsible for refusing to confront the sex crime allegations on their own terms because they wouldn't give up on an irrelevant extradition to the US. The Swedes' first priority was not questioning Assange; it was getting him to Sweden with the option of onward extradition to the US.. Assange was saying, "Let's get rid of an entirely irrelevant third-party that is preventing an investigation into the allegations on their own terms." The Swedes were saying: "No, we insist on preserving the prerogatives and interests of that irrelevant third-party as a condition of our investigation into these sex crime allegations." The Swedes weren't taking that position for the sake of the women making the allegations. Who was centering and who was deprecating "the seriousness with which such allegations are viewed"?

Even under the worst interpretation for him, there is no conceivable logic here in which the Swedish prosecutors are

not at least as responsible as Julian Assange for not doing what was necessary to deal with sexual assault allegations. Nobody who did not demand that the Swedes abjure American extradition can claim that their primary concern was the sexual allegations. If you say he's bluffing, call it! Unless it's you who doesn't want to show your cards.

But in order to see that logic, you have to remain aware of the third party that's in the game, and the pushers of that narrative construct it in such a way to make that third party disappear. Again, the purpose of this discourse is to hide the role of the U.S. in order to protect it.

These facts also show how hypocritical it is for the British to be now promoting this line of diversion. Never mind how utterly phony it is for the government that [refused](#) Spain's extradition request for human-rights criminal Pinochet, despite its own highest court's ruling, to be now proclaiming its sacred duty to obey the Swedish and American extradition demands. As we've seen, it was the British who prevented the Swedes from interviewing Assange early on in this whole affair. They, too, were more concerned about something else than they were about seriously investigating sex-crimes allegations. They, too, were more concerned about someone else than they were about the women making the accusations. Now, rather than accounting for what they did in that respect over the past seven years, British imperial poodles are hypocritically posing as defenders of sex-crime investigation in order to continue diverting attention from the real dealer at the table.

Sweden isn't going to re-open the sex-crime investigation and take Julian Assange off their hands, and they know it. (Absent a post-Corbyn-victory Plan B above. And if the Swedes did, the investigation would be quickly concluded with no charges brought on the basis of the allegations, and the whole case would disappear into the ether as Assange was quickly bundled on the plane to America.) The issue isn't whether Julian

Assange will be prosecuted for sex-crime allegations, for bail jumping, or for being an asshole. The only issue is whether he will be extradited to the US and sent to prison for decades for publishing true facts about US crimes around the world.

## End Game

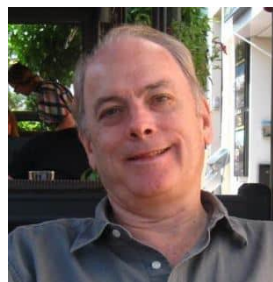
That fight is now taking place, and will be decided, in London. It is imperative that everyone in the UK and US keep constant pressure on that one point. It is imperative that everyone refuse to be drawn into a discourse that changes the subject and diverts attention on to some other issue. The only purpose of such a discourse is to protect the US extradition project by disappearing it behind something else.

There's no avoiding it. We have to support Julian Assange. Period.



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## About the Author



**JIM KAVANAGH, Contributing Editor** • Jim Kavanagh, a native and denizen of New York City, is a former cab driver and college professor. His articles have appeared on Counterpunch, The Greenville Post, The Unz Review, Z, and other sites around the net. He blogs at his website, [thepolemicist.net](http://thepolemicist.net), from a left-socialist perspective. You can follow him on Twitter at [@ThePolemicist](https://twitter.com/ThePolemicist) (<https://twitter.com/ThePolemicist>)



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