



PRESS RELEASE

- For journalists and citizens: Sign the "Geneva's Call to free Assange" launched in June 2021 [by clicking here](#)
- For journalists only: sign the initiative "Speak Up For Assange". See the text of the [initiative and the signature form here](#).

[Watch the press conference in replay](#)

In the name of press freedom, media and journalists call for the release of Assange

(Geneva - 06/22/2022) - Invited by the Geneva Press Club/Club suisse de la presse, organizations of journalists, publishers and editors from Switzerland and various other countries gathered in Geneva on Wednesday at a press conference to launch a "Call to free Julian Assange in the name of press freedom". Their call comes in the immediate aftermath of British Home Secretary Priti Patel's authorization on Friday 17 June to extradite the WikiLeaks founder. The call's bearers have directly called on the British and American authorities to immediately release the WikiLeaks founder and drop the charges against him. The broad and international coalition of journalists, editors and publishers from many countries supports Julian Assange, whose health is failing in his fight to regain his freedom and preserve press freedom.

Julian Assange has already announced that it will appeal the latest decision. The fate of Julian Assange is now back in the hands of the British judges, it was recalled during the press conference who have a last opportunity to prove its independence, its humanity, and its commitment to the values of the rule of law and freedom of the press. The Swiss authorities, who have said they have worked to protect Assange, are called upon to facilitate his release by offering him a safe haven from further prosecution in Switzerland or elsewhere in collaboration with other governments. The Attorney General's decision further tightens the noose on basic human rights and on a press that has had its freedoms curtailed.

Under the long-outdated U.S. Espionage Act of 1917 (17 of the 18 charges relate to it), the Australian faces up to 175 years in prison. An extradition and conviction of Julian Assange would prohibit journalists from using "leaks" and so-called "classified" documents, even if they contain information of major public interest. The media and journalists present in Geneva or by videoconference see this as a major impediment to their work and, at the same time, a threat to the proper functioning of democracies (and even more so of other regimes), which is only guaranteed by the freedom to investigate and publish.

Fifteen representatives of journalists' and publishers' organizations from six countries and 13 Swiss editors joined their voices for this Call. The representatives of foreign associations of journalists

journalists (Australia, France, Germany, Spain...) described the mobilization and demands of journalists in their countries and the obstacles to press freedom.

Beyond the serious repercussions of the Assange case for the freedom to investigate, for access to sources and for the transparency of democratic functioning, some speakers denounced measures that also weaken press freedom in Switzerland, which has fallen from 10th to 14th place in the latest Reporters Without Borders press freedom index. The United Nations Rapporteur on freedom of the press, Irene Khan, has called Switzerland into question. She believes that the law on banks, which punishes the transmission or disclosure of normally inaccessible bank data, leads to the "criminalization of journalists". The Swiss parliament is asked to review this law in the shortest term. This legislation has prevented the Swiss media from participating in the research conducted by foreign journalists on the so-called "secret Swiss" leaks.

Another example cited was a recent decision by the Swiss parliament to relax the provisions for banning an article before publication without assessing the harm on the merits (provisional measures). The threats against Julian Assange and measures such as the one mentioned above increase the pressure on journalists who risk jail time simply for revealing verified and disturbing information. These conditions also encourage self-censorship and run counter to the public interest.

On a human level, the health of Julian Assange, who has been imprisoned in the high security prison of Belmarsh, London, for more than three years, has severely deteriorated. According to Nils Melzer, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture, the conditions of Julian Assange's arbitrary detention fall under "psychological torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment". Before his arrest in 2019 in London, Julian Assange had lived for seven years in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, from which he was expelled following a change of government in Quito.

As a reminder, the Australian created WikiLeaks in 2006 and since 2010 has made public, partly in collaboration with major media, hundreds of thousands of classified documents revealing scandals of corruption, espionage and human rights violations. In particular, he revealed a video that shocked the world, showing an attack from an American helicopter on civilians on the ground in the streets of Baghdad, killing several people, including two Reuters journalists. No prosecution has ever been brought for the apparent war crimes or other gross and flagrant violations of international law and human rights law revealed by WikiLeaks. Only Assange has been in prison for three years awaiting trial for his embarrassing revelations. Julian Assange will be 51 years old on July 3.

All journalists and citizens of all countries are called upon to join this Call.

- For journalists and citizens: Sign the "**Geneva's Call to free Assange**" launched in June 2021 and which has already collected more than 11'000 signatures [by clicking here](#)
- For journalists only: sign the initiative "**Speak Up For Assange**" already supported by 1900 journalists from 107 countries. See the text of the [initiative and the signature form here](#).

List of participants announced at the Geneva Press Club's Conference on June 22

- **Pierre Ruetschi**, Executive Director, Swiss Press Club and President of the Dumur Award
- **Edgar Bloch**, co-President, impressum, Swiss Journalists
- **Daniel Hammer**, Secretary General, Media Suisses
- **Denis Masméjan**, Secretary General, Reporters Without Borders, Switzerland
- **Dominique Pradalié**, President, International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and National Union of Journalists (France)
- **Tim Dawson**, National Union of Journalists, Great Britain (zoom)
- **Karen Percy**, President, Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA), Australia (Zoom)
- **Mika Beuster**, Co-Leader, Deutscher Journalisten Verband, Germany (Zoom)
- **Agustin Yanel**, Secretary General, Federation of Spanish Journalists' Unions, Spain
- **Marc Meschenmoser**, co-president Investigativ.ch
- **Jean-Philippe Ceppi**, producer, Temps Présent (RTS) and member of investigativ.ch
- **Frédéric Julliard**, editor in chief, Tribune de Genève
- **Nicole Lamon**, deputy editor-in-chief, Matin Dimanche
- **Jean Musy**, President of the Association of Foreign Press in Switzerland (APES)
- **Philippe Bach**, Editor-in-Chief, Le Courrier
- **Serge Michel**, Editor-in-Chief, heidi.news

List of Swiss media editors who support the June 22 Call

- **Philippe Bach**, Editor-in-chief, Le Courrier
- **Laurent Caspary**, Editor-in-Chief, RTS Radio
- **Rémy Chételat**, Editor-in-Chief, Le Quotidien Jurassien
- **Ariane Dayer**, Head of editorial staff Tamedia/Editor-in chief Le Matin Dimanche
- **Vincent Fragnière**, Editor-in-Chief, Le Nouvelliste
- **Madeleine von Holzen**, Le Temps
- **Frédéric Julliard**, Editor-in-Chief, Tribune de Genève
- **Laurent Kleisl**, Editor-in-chief, Journal du Jura
- **Nicole Lamon**, Deputy editor-in-chief, Le Matin Dimanche
- **Eric Lecluyse**, Editor-in-chief, ArcInfo
- **Elisabeth Logean**, Co-editor-in-chief, RTS actualité
- **François Mauron**, editor-in-chief, La Liberté
- **Serge Michel**, Editor-in-chief, heidi.news
- **Pierre-Olivier Volet**, Co-editor-in-chief, RTS Actualité