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Signatories of an open letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson included the president of Argentina and two former presidents of Brazil.



Julian Assange's lawyer Jennifer Robinson arrives at the the Old Bailey courthouse in London on Monday. Frank Augstein / AP

LONDON — More than 160 current and former world leaders, lawmakers and diplomats have endorsed a call for the U.K. to free WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and stop his extradition to the U.S.

The signatories of the open letter, addressed to U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and several government ministers, included the president of Argentina and two former presidents of Brazil, Dilma Rousseff and Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva.

Assange, 49, is currently fighting extradition to the U.S. where he faces up to 175 years in prison on espionage charges over WikiLeaks' release of confidential diplomatic cables in 2010 and 2011. The letter was first written by the group [Lawyers for Assange](#) in August, and then [received the support](#) of the international signatories whose names were released on Monday.

It laid out several legal reasons why Assange shouldn't be extradited, including the claim that he wouldn't face a fair trial in the U.S., and that he would "be exposed to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

His extradition "would gravely endanger freedom of the press," the letter said.

"This demonstrates the growing opposition around the world to U.S. efforts to extradite and prosecute Assange, and the political nature of this case," Assange's lawyer, Jennifer Robinson, told NBC News.

Many of the letter's signatories, which also include Venezuelan leader Nicolás Maduro and former Ecuadoran leader Rafael Correa, are fierce critics of the U.S. and have previously spoken out against American foreign policy.

Last week, Robinson told a London court that Assange was [offered a presidential pardon](#) in 2017 by then-Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., and Trump associate Charles Johnson if he helped to resolve the "ongoing speculation about Russian involvement" in the hacking of Democratic National Committee emails leaked during the 2016 U.S. election campaign.



A protester stands opposite London's Old Bailey court on Monday as the Julian Assange extradition hearing to the U.S. continued. Frank Augstein / AP

At the hearing in London on Friday, James Lewis, prosecutor for the U.S. government, said: "The position of the government is we don't contest these things were said. We obviously do not accept the truth of what was said by others."

Assange has been in a British prison since his ejection from the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in April 2019. He was granted asylum by Ecuador in 2012 over fears he would face possible extradition to the U.S. related to his work with WikiLeaks.

Prosecutors in the U.S. say Assange conspired with U.S. army intelligence analyst [Chelsea](#)

[Manning](#) to
hack into a Pentagon computer and release hundreds of thousands of secret diplomatic cables
and military files.

His supporters say the leaked documents exposed U.S. military wrongdoing, and argue he was
acting as a journalist.

Among the files published by WikiLeaks in 2010 was a video of a [2007 Apache helicopter
attack](#) by American forces in
Baghdad that killed 11 people, including two Reuters journalists.

The extradition hearing, which began in February but was postponed in April because of the
pandemic, is due to last until early October.

[List of signatories on the call to free Julian Assange.](#) You can find daily information on
what's happening at the trial by visiting
[Assange Defense](#)