

UN envoy warns that Julian Assange will disappear for the rest of his life inside U.S. prisons



Berlin, November 27 (RHC)-- The UN rapporteur on torture has accused British and American authorities of waging a one-sided war against WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, "violating due process at every step," as Assange's condition in prison deteriorates.

Speaking at a demonstration in Berlin on Wednesday, rapporteur Nils Melzer told RT that if the judicial institutions prosecuting Assange were "doing their job according to the law," then they would take the WikiLeaks head's declining health into account in their extradition efforts. However, Melzer does not expect any reprieve for Assange.

The whole system is skewed against him. It's not a case of prosecution, it's a case of persecution, and that's how persecution works.

Since his forced eviction from London's Ecuadorian embassy in April, Assange has languished in Belmarsh Prison, first facing extradition to Sweden for a since-dropped sexual assault case, and now to the United States, where he faces 175 years in prison if found guilty of espionage. The spying charges stem from his publication of classified military documents, detailing war crimes by U.S. forces in Iraq and

Afghanistan.

Melzer has sounded the alarm about the conditions of Assange's detention before, accusing British authorities of "psychological torture," and warning that he could face further torture if extradited to the United States. The rapporteur is not alone in raising these concerns either. In an open letter addressed to British Home Secretary Priti Patel earlier this week, over 60 medical professionals from across the world voiced their concern over the physical and mental health of the publisher, warning that "Mr. Assange could die in prison."

Melzer met Assange in prison six months ago, and described his situation as "critical." Since then, the torture envoy said that the WikiLeaks founder's conditions have been "getting more oppressive and there's more intense surveillance and stricter isolation."

During Melzer's visit, Assange was kept in solitary confinement for 23 hours per day, and was denied access to the prison's library and gym. He is reportedly suffering from depression, and held back tears as he struggled to remember his own name and date of birth at a court appearance last month.

If extradited to the U.S., Melzer is "absolutely convinced" that Assange will be subjected to "a politicized show trial," with "secret evidence" and "closed door" testimony. "He's going to be sentenced by the same judge that sentences all of these whistleblowers in a closed court in East Virginia, and he'll disappear in a high security prison in inhumane conditions for the rest of his life," Melzer's dour prediction concluded.

Melzer spoke to RT in Berlin, beside a series of statues dedicated to Assange, U.S. Army whistleblower Chelsea (formerly Bradley) Manning, and NSA whistleblower Edward Snowden. The installation, entitled 'Anything to Say' depicts the three figures rising from their seats in life-size bronze, with a fourth chair left empty as a platform for public speaking.

"This is not really about Assange or Snowden or Manning," Melzer said. "This is about us, it's about our governments, their integrity, the rule of law, and the future: Of ourselves, our human dignity and our children."

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