

Julian Assange's brother says imprisoned WikiLeaks founder is not in good health

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By MORGAN PHILLIPS / DAILYMAIL.COM

Washington, March 12 (RHC)-- Spotted at President Biden's State of the Union last week on Capitol Hill was Gabriel Shipton, who alongside Kentucky Republican Rep. Thomas Massie is fighting for clemency for his brother, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

They hoped to take their fight straight to the president, who so far has been unresponsive to pleas to address the Department of Justice's prosecution of Assange.

Assange has been held in a London prison since 2019 as he fights against U.S. extradition efforts. He previously spent seven years in self-exile at the Ecuadorian embassy in London.

'He's not in a good way,' Shipton said in an interview with DailyMail.com, having visited his brother last month. 'The process is really wearing him down physically and mentally. So I was quite scared leaving the prison that day.'

The Australian native faces 17 charges for receiving, possessing and communicating classified information to the public under the espionage act and one charge alleging a conspiracy to commit computer intrusion if he is extradited to the U.S. He faces up to 175 years in a maximum security prison.

Massie, together with Democratic Rep. Jim McGovern of Massachusetts, wrote a letter in October to the Biden administration imploring them to oppose Assange's prosecution. They have not received a response.

'We just keep on campaigning, we've got lots of friends here in Congress, and it's very encouraging,' Shipton said. 'He's not charged with any crime in the United Kingdom is not serving a sentence. He's been held there solely at the request of the US DOJ in relation to publishing truthful material. So really highlighting that and highlighting the threat that it poses to the First Amendment and press freedom here in the U.S.'

Assange founded Wikileaks in 2006 and was instrumental to the unveiling of nearly half a million pages of mostly classified documents together with U.S. intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning.

In 2010, the site published documents of a 2007 Baghdad airstrike that showed U.S. military officers fatally shooting 18 civilians from a helicopter.

They published Afghanistan war documents that painted a dismal picture of the war there, including more civilian deaths and Taliban attacks on U.S. forces than had been reported and suggested Iran involvement in the insurgency. Wikileaks also published the Iraq war documents - which revealed some 15,000 more civilian casualties than had been admitted by the government.

Massie suspected Assange's case could become a focal point in the presidential election. "Whether we are going to uphold our over 200-year tradition of supporting freedom of the press or not," Massie told DailyMail.com.

"This is a very popular issue with Americans, ie to get clemency to Julian Assange. And although it's not as important as immigration or the economy of the two Americans, I think most Americans are on our side. And it's not just the right thing to do. It would be politically expedient for one of these presidential candidates to adopt our position." He warned that they will need to draw votes from Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who is running as a third-party candidate and has promised he would grant clemency to Assange.

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