

# WikiLeaks founder faces 175 years in US jail

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*Fight or flight:* Assange spent seven years claiming asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy.

**Is Julian Assange a hero? The journalist-activist has been fighting a legal battle for his freedom for 14 years. Today may decide if he will spend the rest of his life in prison.**

## What's happening?

Julian Assange is fighting for his future.

Later today, a court in London is expected to decide whether or not he should be sent from the UK to the USA to face spying charges. If he goes back to the USA, he could be sent to prison for 175 years.

## Find out more

Assange is the founder of **WikiLeaks**, an international group that publishes secret documents **leaked** to it from **governments** around the world.

Supporters call its work citizen journalism, sharing dark secrets that powerful figures want to keep hidden. Critics say it is a group with an **anti-Western bias** and a close relationship to **dictators**.

Although it has leaked documents from many governments, the most controversial leaks have come from the USA. The USA accuses WikiLeaks of putting lives in danger, although it has never

proved that anyone was harmed due to the leaks.

WikiLeaks claim it does not have an anti-Western bias and many of its most important stories had nothing to do with the US.

From 2012 to 2019, Assange lived in the **Ecuadorian embassy** in London. He was avoiding being arrested and sent to either the USA or Sweden, where he was accused of sexual assault.

**Is Julian Assange a hero?**

## Some say

Yes! Assange is a **journalist** who dared to share key information that others were too afraid to publish. He has paid a terrible price for his brave actions.

## Others think

No! Some say Assange was not careful enough about the information he shared. His work could have put people in danger.

## Some people say

*"Journalism is what we need to make democracy work."*

**Walter Cronkite (1916 – 2009), US journalist**

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*What do you think?*

## Six steps to discovery

### 1. Connect

**How do you feel about this story?** - Do you feel sorry for Assange?

### 2. Wonder

**What questions do you have?** - For example: Should people ever be punished for journalism?

### 3. Investigate

**What are the facts?** - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure from this story.

### 4. Construct

**What is your point of view?** - You are one of the judges in the Assange case. Should he be sent to the USA, or given his freedom?

### 5. Express

**What do others believe?** - You find out important information about a terrible thing the leaders of your country have done — but sharing it could put other people at risk. What should you do? Discuss as a class.

### 6. Reflect

**What might happen next?** - Write a letter to a newspaper explaining what you think should happen to Assange.

## Glossary

**WikiLeaks** - A whistleblowing platform founded by Julian Assange. It has published news leaks and classified documents obtained by anonymous individuals.

**Leaked** - Shown to people without permission.

**Governments** - Groups of people who govern - or lead - countries.

**anti-Western** - Refers to broad opposition, bias, or hostility towards the people, culture, or policies of the Western world.

**Bias** - Biases are beliefs that systematically and unfairly distort a person's decisions, in favour or against one group or another.

**Dictators** - Rulers with total power over a country.

**Ecuadorian** - Ecuador is a South American country with a population of nearly 18 million.

**Embassy** - The workplace of a group of government officials who represent their country in another country.

**Journalist** - Somebody who writes about the latest news for newspapers and magazines or explains the news on television.