

Julian Assange free after spy charges deal

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Locked up: Assange, pictured in 2014, spent more than 10 years first in London's Ecuadorian embassy and then in prison.

Is this a victory for freedom of the press? A 14-year struggle between the US state and the man who revealed its secrets has come to an end. Neither side will be completely happy.

What's happening?

Yesterday the eyes of the world were on one man, Julian Assange, as he made his way home to **Australia**.

He signed a **plea deal** with US officials, and put to an end a 14-year drama. Under the deal, he will agree that he is **guilty** of one **espionage** charge. But he will not be given any more time in prison.

Find out more

Assange started **WikiLeaks**, an international group that publishes information it thinks the public should know about, in 2006.

Over the years it shared thousands of secret documents. But it became the focus of American anger in 2010, when it published a series of files secretly passed to it by US soldier Chelsea Manning.

One of these files showed a US helicopter gunning down unarmed **civilians**, including two **Reuters** journalists, in Iraq.

The US government opened a criminal investigation over the sharing of the files. Since then Assange has been **fighting** against being sent to the USA from the UK.

Throughout this time, Assange and his supporters argued that he and WikiLeaks are **journalists**, sharing the truth with the public.

Others say that WikiLeaks broke the law and put people's lives in danger by sharing secret information.

Today, many of Assange's supporters are happy. But they are not sure whether this is really a win for press freedom. They say the US has shown that journalists can be found guilty of crimes just for doing their jobs.

Is this a victory for freedom of the press?

Some say

Yes! Assange won his long fight for freedom against one of the world's most powerful countries. It will give other people belief and hope.

Others think

No! **Responsible** journalists find the balance between letting the truth be known and keeping people in danger. Assange is not a journalist but rather an **activist**.

Some people say

"If journalism is good, it is controversial, by its nature."

Julian Assange (1971 –), Australian journalist/activist

What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - What do you think of Julian Assange?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: Can journalism ever be a crime?

3. Investigate

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

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - Do you think Julian Assange should have been found guilty of a crime? Why or why not?

5. Express

What do others believe? - What qualities should a good journalist have? Get in a small group and work together to write them down in a list.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - If you were a journalist, how would you feel about the news? Would it change what stories you told?

Glossary

Australia - The largest country in Oceania, home to only 27 million people.

Plea deal - When someone agrees that they are guilty of a crime in order to avoid a trial and in exchange for a lower sentence.

Guilty - Responsible for doing something wrong.

Espionage - Spying.

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

Civilians - People who are not in the army or the police.

Reuters - A major worldwide news agency.

Journalists - People whose job it is to report on the news.

Responsible - Ofcom, the UK communications regulator, will be able to issue fines of up to £18m or 10% of a company's global turnover. They will also have the power to block access to sites in the UK.

Activist - Someone who campaigns for social or political change.