

Mr George Brandis  
High Commissioner to the United Kingdom  
Australia House  
Strand, London WC2B 4LA

June 2018

Dear Mr Brandis,

We Australians, here in London and from further afield, welcome the first ever visit to Julian Assange by Australian consular staff on 8 June 2018<sup>i</sup> as a sign of a new regard for Mr Assange's human rights as you take the helm at the High Commission.

As of this month, Mr Assange has been confined six years in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, which the UN has deemed an arbitrary deprivation of his liberty: a grave human rights abuse which ought to end expeditiously and for which, according to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, he ought to be compensated by Britain and Sweden.<sup>ii</sup>

We hope you share our deep concern at attacks on whistle-blowers and the danger posed to our democracy, security and good governance when whistle-blowers are thus deterred. As President Obama said in 2008, in relation to US government whistle-blowing, 'We only know these crimes took place because insiders blew the whistle at great personal risk ... [W]histle-blowers are part of a healthy democracy and must be protected from reprisal.'<sup>iii</sup>

The High Commission has a duty to ensure Mr Assange, an Australian citizen, is treated no less favourably than local citizens detained for similar offences. British citizens enjoy the protection of the UK Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights which guarantee their right to freedom of expression. 'This right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers'<sup>iv</sup> and to do so 'without interference by public authority'.<sup>v</sup>

He also has a right to be presumed innocent and given a fair trial<sup>vi</sup> and a right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.<sup>vii</sup> As Australian High Commissioner, you must ensure Mr Assange's treatment by UK authorities accords with those standards.

In light of the above, we, the undersigned ask you to convey our urgent and emphatic request to our Government to do its utmost to defend Julian Assange's human rights and the free and lawful operation of Wikileaks. Specifically, we ask the Australian Government to:

1. Promptly renew Mr Assange's Australian passport following its recent expiry;
2. Ensure Mr Assange is guaranteed full and timely access to all necessary medical and dental care;
3. Respect and defend his right to receive information and impart information freely, without interference by any public authority;
4. Robustly defend Mr Assange at home and abroad and object to threats levelled against Mr Assange by high-profile US citizens and others;<sup>viii</sup>
5. Strenuously oppose any application to have Mr Assange extradited to the United States, where it is unlikely he would receive a fair trial; and
6. Press the UK government to 'facilitate the exercise of his right to freedom of movement in an expedient manner' and both the UK and Swedish governments to compensate him for his arbitrary detention.<sup>ix</sup>

We thank you for your attention to these matters of fundamental importance to a free and democratic society.

Sincerely,

Nick Miller, 'Australian officials spotted in mysterious Assange visit', Sydney Morning Herald, 8 June 2018 <<https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/australian-officials-spotted-in-mysterious-assange-visit-20180608-p4zk7w.html>>.

ii 'The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention Deems the deprivation of liberty of Mr. Julian Assange as arbitrary' 4 December 2015 <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17012>>.

iii Ann Wright, 'Obama: No whistleblowing on my watch', Common Dreams, 6 January 2011 <<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2011/01/06/obama-no-whistleblowing-my-watch>>.

iv Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The same is stated more fully in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Australia is a party, and Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which also applies to Mr Assange.

v ECHR, Art. 10(1).

vi ECHR, Art. 6 and elsewhere.

vii International Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights, article 12(1).

viii Nick Miller, 'Australian officials spotted in mysterious Assange visit', Sydney Morning Herald, 8 June 2018.

ix 'The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention Deems the deprivation of liberty of Mr Julian Assange as arbitrary', 4 December 2015 <<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17012>>.