

Only the people can save Assange and Manning

Stefania Maurizi is an investigative journalist working for the Italian daily La Repubblica. She has worked on all WikiLeaks releases of secret documents and partnered with Glenn Greenwald to expose the Snowden Files about Italy. She has authored two books—Dossier WikiLeaks: Segreti Italiani and Una Bomba, Dieci Storie. In an exclusive (electronic) interview with Eresh Omar Jamal of The Daily Star, Maurizi talks about the arrests of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange and whistleblower Chelsea Manning, who together revealed to the world, the reality of the Iraq and Afghan wars.

On April 11, the UK police arrested Julian Assange from the Ecuadorian embassy. How significant was his arrest and the manner in which it happened for global press freedom and the right of people to seek political asylum?

His arrest is a real tragedy, for him, in the first place, because let's not forget that behind Mr WikiLeaks there is a human being: Julian Assange. I think this needs to be clarified, and I'm not saying this lightly, I am serious: if you've read the press reports over the last six years and ten months, while Assange has been confined in the tiny building of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London without even one hour a day outdoors, you will have observed a complete lack of empathy or interest on the media's part in his condition and the widespread reports that his health was seriously declining due to his confinement.

But in addition to being a tragedy for him personally, it is also a tragedy for press freedom and human rights, because he is now at extremely serious risk of being extradited to the US for his journalistic work and this is not my opinion, this is what the US extradition request is about. The US extradition request concerns the 2010 WikiLeaks publications made possible by Chelsea Manning. They are among the most significant revelations in the history of journalism.

These publications are so important that almost 10 years after their release they are still being used by journalists, activists and scholars. Look at the legal case of the Chagos islanders: they used the WikiLeaks cables. So, it's a tragedy that a journalist, an editor, a publisher—call Assange what you will—is at extremely serious risk of ending up in jail in the US for the rest of his life for having had the guts to publish this information.

While he was being dragged out of the embassy, Assange was holding onto a book you gave him. What can you tell us about that book?

I gave Julian Assange that book of interviews with Gore Vidal by the editor of the Real News Network, Paul Jay, "History of the National Security State" back in 2016, a few weeks after the 2016 US elections. It's an important book, because Gore Vidal's analysis of how the US ended up having the most powerful military-intelligence-complex in the world is so brilliant. I was sure that Julian would have appreciated that analysis, because it provides perspective on many years of WikiLeaks' work on millions of documents regarding the US military-intelligence complex. What has always intrigued me about the WikiLeaks founder is the fact that he does understand technology, but he also understands power, while not all geeks understand it.

Most of the narrative about Assange conveys him as an "international mystery man", many focus on his tech skills, but what has always intrigued me is his understanding of how technology is reshaping power, especially at the level of information being released to empower communities, which is what WikiLeaks has done. He and WikiLeaks are far from perfect, and they have certainly made mistakes and questionable choices, but look at how their publications have empowered journalists, activists and scholars. Even publications which appeared to be minor in comparison with the US diplomatic cables, like the Hacking Team emails, continue to inform the public and to empower people. Recently, the Washington Post used them to investigate the Khashoggi murder.



Stefania Maurizi

Why do you think he was holding that particular book? Do you think it was his way of sending people a message?

I really would like to know why he was carrying that book I gave him as a present. I was told that in the days before his arrest he was discussing that book with other WikiLeaks associates, but I am not sure why he had that book with him the day he was arrested. I hope that many will read that important book.

Prior to Assange's arrest, former WikiLeaks source Chelsea (then Bradley) Manning was once again put into prison. What was the reason for that?

The US authorities want to force her to testify against Assange and WikiLeaks and it is likely that they are trying to coerce her to testify to build their case against them. Let's not forget that it has always been tricky for the US authorities to build an effective case, because the WikiLeaks publications are protected by the First Amendment, which is why the Obama Administration ultimately didn't go ahead with the prosecution of Assange and WikiLeaks, as the Trump Administration is now doing.

It is likely that by coercing Chelsea Manning to testify, the US authorities are trying to find ways around the First Amendment protection. But due to the extraordinary secrecy of the Grand Jury proceedings, we don't know what the US authorities actually want from her. What we can say however is that Chelsea Manning has extraordinary courage and integrity.

She had the courage to leak secret documents to WikiLeaks providing evidence of war crimes and serious human rights violations, even though she was fully aware of the extremely serious consequences she would face. She spent seven years in prison for her ethical choice, 11 months of which were characterised as "cruel and inhuman" by the UN Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez.

Now Chelsea is back in jail for refusing to cooperate with the Grand Jury, and the US authorities have even ordered her to be fined 500 dollars for each day she remains in prison after 30 days, and 1,000 dollars after 60 days. History won't be kind to the US authorities for their treatment of Chelsea Manning and of all conscientious objectors who have exposed war crimes. Ethically, she is a giant, a true hero in the finest tradition of conscientious objectors.

In your view, what are the unfolding and future implications of these two events?

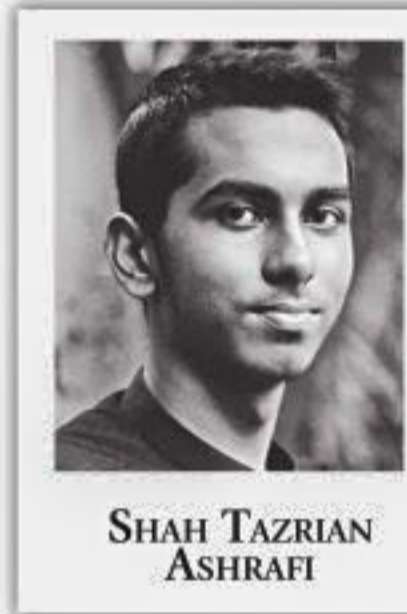
The implications are huge and you don't have to be a journalist or an intellectual to understand them. You don't even need to understand complex legal matters. It is all about a very basic principle: do we want to live in a society where war crimes and serious human right violations are exposed and those who commit those crimes are held accountable?

If we do, then we have to protect journalistic sources and whistleblowers like Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden, media organisations like WikiLeaks and publishers like Julian Assange. Whereas what we have witnessed in the last 9 years has been a relentless and harsh prosecution and persecution of them: Chelsea has been in jail since 2010, Julian Assange has never known freedom again since publishing Chelsea's documents and he may end up in jail for life. Edward Snowden was put in the condition of having to escape to Russia and look for protection there.

All this has happened in a democracy like the US, where apparently president Trump is considering a pardon for troops who committed war crimes, according to press reports, and in a democracy where those who have tortured, killed, unleashed devastating wars like the Iraq war haven't spent a single day in prison. Isn't this world of ours truly upside-down?

Things won't change unless public opinion rebels against this upside-down world. Public opinion has power in a democracy, so there is room for change and action, and change and action are extremely urgent before it is too late for Chelsea and for Julian Assange and the WikiLeaks staff, all of whom, are at extremely serious risk.

We are on the verge of welcoming another world



SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

PERHAPS, the Pakicetus had metamorphosed into Ambulocetus and then into whales only to be plucked out of their kingdom of waters centuries later. Whales are essential carbon trappers. Their excreta help thrive certain phytoplanktons, which tackle the carbon of the atmosphere, ensuring a better environment for all animals. As per estimates, 400,000 tonnes of carbon are extracted from the air due to the activity of sperm whales.

In a world where carbon emitters spring up like fast trees, carbon trappers are in dire need of conservation. Be it the forests, the whales, or any other entities.

Recently, Norway has renewed its long-standing ban on hunting herrings in the Lofoten region—a critical sanctuary for marine life. Costa Rica has aimed to emerge as a carbon and plastic-free country within



no soil under our feet, the air will keep destroying our lungs. Perhaps, we need an evolution for this gunmetal, fiery, and foggy age of Climate Crisis. Gills for lungs, fins and tails for hands and legs would be just perfect to help us swim when everything's under water.

Ban on hunting in the Lofoten and Costa Rica's decision to go carbon-plastic-free have paved an unwrinkled way for every other nation to follow into their footsteps towards a healthy system. We can only hope that other governments are inspired.

I hope we reach a point one day, when news of anti-environment development projects won't batter our conscience—only the act of saving certain ecosystems, the act of putting environment before development will soothe our minds.

I hope Bangladesh too does something that's environmentally sustainable—stunting the emergence of carbon-spitting factories, enacting strict laws on felling of trees, poaching of animals, filling up of rivers, cutting of hills—and puts nature before development, and stuns the world like Norway did.

If done so, we may still have the earth beneath our feet and better air to breathe. It is high time investments were thrown into preserving the nature than skyrocketing our multi-faceted "development" ratings across the globe. After all, if development means the death of natural entities, it is development against development. Capitalism against nature. The grim conditions around us herald the emergence of an unwanted future lurching towards us. We don't want to slide into a dystopia, where, among other things, we may need synthetic lungs for breathing toxic air.

We are on the verge of welcoming another world, only we can decide whether it would be good or bad.

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just two years. Both incidents hum the songs of hope in this hopeless world and flaunt a loud expression that presents the fact that catering to nature's needs should come first, instead of letting "development works" and corporate greed ravage the planet's alchemy. After all, development will be rendered futile in the long term if it's more detrimental than sustainable, more polarising than uniting. As Vandana Shiva says, our planet will find her way. It's the living beings that will pay the ultimate price.

Also, on the contrary, Botswana, a country with Africa's largest elephant population, has lifted its long-withstanding ban on elephant hunting. Their justification? The large elephant populations were menacing to the farmers' livelihoods. Japan too, is set to initiate commercial whaling from July, diminishing the population of carbon trappers.

These are just a few examples though. Many more good and bad decisions co-exist, of course, but the detrimental ones overpower the healthy ones. The weather that batters us regularly is a glaring example.

In a matter of time, our Sundarbans may turn tiger-less, rivers dead, winding creeks dried up, hills levelled, air un-breathable (as if it's any breathable now). Forests will only have trees, their wild animals gone. Factories and hotels will bloom like flowers. There may be no custodians of the trees; hence the indiscriminate felling may go on and on.

The discourse on Rampal may be quiet now, but it's of utmost importance that it rises again. Although promises have been made about how Rampal would do no harm to the Gangetic dolphins and other animal species around its periphery, we are only a disaster away from realising that the promises were perhaps futile. I hope no

disaster transpires though. I really do. But how will the authorities undo the damage once a shipload of coal spills into the saline waters of Sundarbans, floating through the tributaries, the creeks, and settling into the nook and corner of the whole region? How will the authorities undo the damage once the herons and storks and many alike in the region are coated in thick, dark liquid and suffocated to death? How will the authorities undo the damage once the air turns toxic due to the emissions from the Plant?

Sure, we will have electricity, and apparently, we will be richer than the Indians by 2030, which means we can bask more in the coolness of air conditioners in our homes, cars, and offices. But at the end of the day, ice caps will keep melting, forests will keep dying, factories will keep replacing trees, the bones of ozone will keep breaking and breaking. At the end of the day, there will

QUOTABLE Quote

NOAM CHOMSKY
AMERICAN LINGUIST, PHILOSOPHER, HISTORIAN AND POLITICAL ACTIVIST

The smart way to keep people passive and obedient is to strictly limit the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but allow very lively debate within that spectrum.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS	32 Space visitor	10 "Sure thing!"
1 Dinero	34 Red Sea port	16 Suffering
5 Scarlett's love	35 English article	18 Pull forcefully
11 Trade show	38 Gadget	19 Track athletes
12 Knight's attendant	41 Flow into	20 Frost work
13 Shoulder muscle, for short	42 Less bumpy	21 Memo letters
14 Radio knobs	43 Be boastful	22 Magic spell
15 25-Down rooter	44 Diluted	23 Alimony payers
16 Eye part	45 Cruise stop	25 New Haven school
17 Backpack material	DOWN	29 Cup's partner
19 Masseur's place	1 Hand over	30 Trade, for short
22 Music genre	2 Skating jump	33 Suspicious
24 Printing goofs	3 Wood slivers	34 Trig function
26 Plow pullers	4 Blazing	36 Get better
27 Region	5 Houston player	37 Keenness
28 Annoying folks	6 React to bright light	38 Lawn coating
30 Airship	7 Attila's people	39 Longoria of TV
31 CIA's forerunner	8 Tell tales	40 Dog doc
	9 Mess up	41 G-man's org.

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

P	A	R	E	N	T	I	N	G	O	T
C	O	S	T	U	M	E	B	A	L	L
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BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker

BEETLE, FROM THE DAY YOU GOT HERE, YOU'VE AVOIDED WORK, AND NEVER OBEYED ORDERS OR DONE YOUR DUTIES!

NOW WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I THINK I'VE OVERSTAYED MY WELCOME

BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott