

# 'Prosecuting Assange will have a devastating impact on press freedom'

Stefania Maurizi is an investigative journalist working for the Italian daily *Il Fatto Quotidiano*. 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*, she talks about the recent UK court ruling to overturn a decision not to extradite Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, to the US, to face espionage charges.

On December 10, a UK court overturned a decision not to extradite Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, to the US. On what basis did the court make this decision?

The Julian Assange and WikiLeaks case is, without exaggeration, the most important case on press freedom in a century. From Amnesty International to Human Rights Watch, from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) and Reporters Without Borders (RSF)—all the important organisations have condemned the prosecution of Julian Assange, denouncing its devastating impact on journalism and on the public's right to know.

However, the British justice system has completely rejected the press freedom arguments, to the extent that, till date, the whole extradition case revolves around the physical and mental conditions of Julian Assange. The US extradition request was initially rejected by District Judge Vanessa Baraitser, exclusively on the grounds that it would be oppressive to send him to the US because he is at serious risk of suicide. The British High Court of Justice did not reject this risk, but quite the opposite; the US tried to argue that "the judge erred in her overall assessment of the evidence going to the risk of suicide," but the High Court rejected this ground of appeal. However, it accepted the "diplomatic assurances" given by the US authorities that he would not be held in total isolation, under the so-called Special Administrative Measures (SAMs), and would not be incarcerated in the most extreme US prison, ADX Florence—unless he commits any future act that would require such extremely harsh measures—which will reduce his suicide risk, hence the WikiLeaks founder can be extradited. Amnesty has publicly stated that those

assurances are completely unreliable.

Was the court's decision justified, given that the CIA had made secret plans to assassinate or illegally extradite Assange while he was in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, going so far as to risk a "gunfight" in the streets of London?

The British justice system has never cared about the destruction of Julian Assange—it has actively and relentlessly pursued it. The Crown Prosecution Service greatly contributed to creating the legal and diplomatic quagmire that kept Julian Assange arbitrarily detained from 2010 to 2019. It was completely indifferent to the impact of this arbitrary detention on Assange's health. And the Crown Prosecution Service is now assisting the US authorities in extraditing him to a country that wants to bury him in prison for life for doing journalism—revealing extraordinarily important information in the public interest.

The British courts have completely ignored the decision of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which called for Assange to be released and compensated. They have completely ignored the UN special rapporteur on torture, Nils Melzer, who established that the WikiLeaks founder had been psychologically tortured. As the great British director Ken Loach wrote in his preface to my Italian book, *"Il Potere Segreto. Perché vogliamo distruggere Julian Assange e WikiLeaks"*, which will be available in English next year, this case is a "monstrous injustice." The British High Court has simply followed that path, ruling that he can be extradited to a country whose intelligence agencies planned to assassinate him.

Assange has recently had what has been described as a mini stroke while in Belmarsh prison. UN Special Rapporteur Nils Melzer said that the US was trying to kill Assange by forcing



Stefania Maurizi PHOTO: COURTESY

him to stay in detention. What are your thoughts on this situation?

I completely agree with Nils Melzer that the UK is literally torturing him to death. People might think that this is an exaggeration, because the British authorities don't waterboard him and they don't burn cigarettes on his arms. But the point is that there is no need for cigarette burns on Julian Assange's arms when you can bring him to the brink of suicide, through nine years of arbitrary detention, without even an hour a day outdoors and no way out.

With my newspaper—initially the leading Italian newsmagazine *L'Espresso* and the Italian daily *La Repubblica*, and today the major Italian daily *Il Fatto Quotidiano*—I have worked on the WikiLeaks secret documents since 2009. I have known Julian Assange for over a decade, witnessing the hell he has gone through, while the media laughed at him for saying the US

was after him and other WikiLeaks journalists for publishing the secret documents on the Afghan and Iraq wars, the US diplomacy cables and the Guantanamo files. Every morning I wake up terrified that he may have committed suicide or may have died in prison. It's very obvious that the American and British authorities want to break him, and they are succeeding; his physical and mental health is seriously impaired.

Why is the US government so desperate to kill or get their hands on Assange? Out of all the journalists in the world, what is so special about him in their eyes?

The US authorities want him and the WikiLeaks journalists in prison for life because they did not just expose their dirty secrets; they made billions of people realise that the war against secrecy—when secrecy is not used to protect citizens, but rather to cover up state criminality at the highest level—can be won. That is a devastating prospect for the US authorities, and actually for the US's enemies as well. Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran may have been very happy to see how WikiLeaks exposed US war crimes, torture, and extrajudicial killings by drones; they may have been happy when WikiLeaks embarrassed the US.

But at the same time, they fear that, sooner or later, it might happen to them as well. They could be the next to have their dirty secrets exposed.

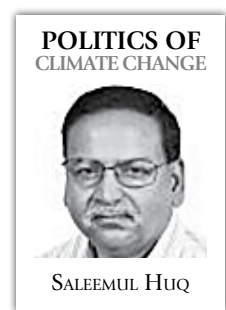
In the digital world, it's very difficult to control secrets. The fact that in less than a decade, the Pentagon, the Department of State, the CIA and the NSA lost control of their dirty secrets demonstrates how vulnerable they are. And so the US, its allies and its enemies need a tragic ending; they need to show anyone who dares to do what Julian Assange and WikiLeaks have done that the consequences of such actions are devastating. They have to build a powerful deterrent to terrify everyone, which is what they are doing to Julian Assange. Whereas we journalists, intellectuals, artists want the exact opposite: we want to build a world in which journalists and whistleblowers can reveal war crimes and torture, and be safe and free afterwards. We want to build a world where the highest levels of power are accountable, and are not above the law.

Daniel Ellsberg, who released the Pentagon Papers, said that this was the single most important press-related case in history. Why, then, don't we see more mention of it in the international press? Shouldn't there be outrage, given

the legal precedent it would set for journalists around the world?

I think that in the last two years, many things have changed and we are now seeing a mobilisation in support of Julian Assange and the WikiLeaks journalists. All the press giants are running editorials opposing his extradition; the biggest journalistic unions are opposing it; artists and intellectuals are speaking out. I will not forget the media's role in crushing Julian Assange and the WikiLeaks journalists—thereby making a long demonisation campaign against him possible—but the brutal arrest of Assange and the charges against him have made media people realise how devastating this case is for press freedom globally. We need even more: we need a mass mobilisation, millions from London to New York, from Dhaka to Rome, taking to the streets to ask for the US to drop the charges and the investigation into the WikiLeaks journalists. Only mass mobilisation can save them—British and American justice systems won't save them. The British and American justice systems keep protecting the war criminals and the torturers—that is who they are—whereas we want a world where the war criminals go to prison and the journalists are free and safe.

## Now it's time to start preparing for COP27



Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—the Conference of Parties (COP)—one thing I have learnt is that waiting until a COP is held to prepare to get something out of it simply does not work. If a country or a group of countries—or anyone else for that matter—wants to influence the outcome of a climate change conference, the work needs to start as soon as the curtain falls on its preceding conference.

In other words, as we have just returned from the 26th Conference of Parties (COP26), held in Glasgow, Scotland in November, we must immediately start to prepare ourselves for COP27, which is scheduled to be held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt in November 2022.

An even more important reason for this is that many of the key decisions that could and should have been finalised in COP26 have been left for COP27.

As we prepare for COP27, an important event we will have to plan for is the Subsidiary Bodies meeting of the UNFCCC, which is scheduled to take place in Bonn, Germany in June 2022, which will be used as the platform to carry forward many of the agenda items from COP26 to COP27. This is an important stepping stone to get the COP27 agenda items well-prepared while aiming for a good outcome of the climate summit next year.

There are also a number of items that have already been mandated to be discussed further in the Subsidiary Bodies meeting, including the functions of the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage (SNLD) as well as the Glasgow Dialogue on Loss and Damage.

As an outcome on the finance for loss and damage is one of the major solutions expected from COP27, this topic will need to be developed and worked on throughout the coming year.

Another very important outcome

of COP26 that has to be taken forward is the Glasgow-Sharm El-Sheikh work programme on the global goal on adaptation (GGA), which was one of the major positive outcomes of COP26.

This will also require holding a number of workshops and meetings with governments as well as scientists in order to try to come up with options for the governments to review and agree on at COP27. An important milestone in this regard is the upcoming publication of the 6th Assessment Report (AR6) of Working Group 2 on Impacts, Vulnerability and Adaptation of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), expected in early 2022. This report will provide the latest knowledge and evidence of the

previously agreed five-year gap between updates. Although this remains a voluntary commitment, many countries are expected to honour this agreement and update their NDCs by COP27 next year.

The CVF, under the leadership of Bangladesh, played a significant role in COP26, and even though Bangladesh will be handing over the chair to Ghana before COP27, it will nevertheless remain one of the *Troika* of CVF leaders for the next two terms. So Bangladesh will continue to play a major role in the political leadership that the CVF has acquired. One aspect of that leadership was the fact that when COP26 started, there were 47 developing countries in the CVF; by the end of COP26, seven new members were added to the



We need to prepare well to make COP27 a successful summit, which will take time.

PHOTO: REUTERS

success of different ways of adaptation to climate change, which can then be considered in developing the GGA.


Bangladeshi scientists will also be making an important contribution on this issue as we promote the concept of, as well as practise, Locally Led Adaptation (LLA), which focuses on building the adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities from the bottom up, and in which Bangladesh is an acknowledged world leader.

An important expectation from COP26, to which the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, made a very significant contribution, was agreement for every country to make an annual update of their respective Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) plans, to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases, instead of

forum. Thus, the CVF has emerged as a significant political force on climate change issues—even beyond the climate summits.

Hence, Bangladesh as a key leader needs to prepare itself for a successful outcome in COP27 next year, by participating effectively in every single international meeting that will take place around the world every week, in order to push our agenda for successfully tackling the global problem of human-induced climate change, which now needs daily actions. Both the government and civil society actors from Bangladesh can play vital roles in tackling climate change, but the work has to start right now.

Dr Saleemul Huq is the director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) at the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB).



### AGRANI BANK LIMITED

Establishment & Engineering Division  
Head Office, 9/D Dilkusha C/A, Motijheel, Dhaka.

#### Invitation For Tenders (IFT)

1.	Procuring Entity Name	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head office (7 <sup>th</sup> floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.
2.	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka.
3.	Invitation for	Supply & Installation of Air Cooler for Agrani Bank Limited, Zonal Office, Jessore; Jhumhumpur Branch, Jessore and Jessore Medical College Branch, Jessore.
4.	Invitation Ref No	E & ED/ ENGG/ MECHA-2/330/2021
5.	Date	Date : 19/12/2021
6.	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM).
7.	Budget and Source of Funds	Own fund of Agrani Bank Limited.
8.	Tender Publication Date	19/12/2021
9.	Tender Last Selling Date	10/01/2022 during office hour
10.	Tender Receiving Date and Time	11/01/2022 at 10.00 AM to 03.00 PM
	Tender Closing Date and Time	11/01/2022 at 03.00 PM
11.	Tender Opening Date and Time	11/01/2022 at 03.15 PM in presence of Tenderers or their representatives (if any present)
12.	Name & Address of the office(s)	
	Selling Tender Document.	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head office (7 <sup>th</sup> floor), Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
	Selling Tender Document(Others)	N/A
	Receiving Tender Document	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head office (7 <sup>th</sup> floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.
	Opening Tender Document	DGM's Chamber, Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head office (7 <sup>th</sup> floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000.
13.	INFORMATION FOR TENDERER (Eligibility of Tender):	
	Reputed Firm/organization/Manufacturer/authorized agent who have minimum 03(Three) years of general experience of similar nature of works. (Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper.)	
	Having experience in successfully completion of Air Cooler Supply & Installation of at least 02 contract(s) within the last 03 years, each with a value of at least TK.13.50 Lac. (Years counting backward from the date of publication of IFT in the newspaper.)	
	The Tenderer must attach:	
	UP to date valid Trade license ii) In case of Limited Company, the certificate of Incorporation, Memorandum of Association, Article of association & Power of attorney iii) Up-to-date income tax certificate iv) Valid VAT registration certificate v) e-TIN Certificate.	
	The minimum amount of liquid assets or working capital or credit facilities shall be TK. 20.00 lac. Should be counting 28 days backward from the date of opening of tender. In case of Bank Solvency Certificate, an account statement should be attached counting 90 days backward from the date of opening of tender.	
	The Tenderer will submit their financial statements such as profit and loss statements and audited balance sheet of last 03 years.	
	The Tenderer must submit: i) International Standard Compliance (CE/UL/ISO/Any other) of mentioned brand ii) Catalogue/ Brochure must be submitted with Tender iii) Necessary document of Distributor/ Authorize Dealer/Importer of Mentioned Brand.	
	All other reputed qualification, terms and conditions of the tenderer are shown in the tender date sheet (TDS) of Tender documents and all experience certificate will be submitted as per format. Necessary supporting Documents to be submitted as per requirement of ITT Clauses and technical specification of the tender.	
14.	Completion Time	4 (Four) weeks from the date of Contract Signing.
15.	Brief Description of Goods	Any brand manufactured or assembled in JAPAN/MALAYSIA/SOUTH KOREA/TAIWAN/THAILAND/USE/ EU Counters or equivalent to these countries accepted/ approved by the bank authority in accordance with fulfillment of the given specifications and having relevant certificates as mentioned & as per detailed specifications & standard as mentioned in STD.
		SI.No Capacity Type Quantity
		01 12000 BTU/Hr Split 02
		02 17000-18000 BTU/Hr Split 01
		03 22500-24000 BTU/Hr Split 01
		04 22500-24000 BTU/Hr Cassette 03
		05 34000-36000 BTU/Hr Cassette 07
16.	Brief Description of Related Services	As mentioned in STD.
17.	Tender Document Price	TK. 2,000.00 (Taka Two Thousand) only per set (non-refundable) by Pay order/Bank Draft from any scheduled bank in favour of Agrani Bank Limited, Head Office, Dhaka.
	PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS	
18.	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Mohammad Yousuf Khan
19.	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy General Manager.
20.	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Agrani Bank Limited, Establishment & Engineering Division, Head office (7 <sup>th</sup> floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka.
21.	Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Deputy General Manager, Establishment & Engineering Division, Agrani Bank Limited, Head office (7 <sup>th</sup> floor), 9/D, Dilkusha, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000. Tel: 02-223381674; e-mail: dgmeed@agrani-bank.org
22.	Special Instructions	
	i) Tender security money must be submitted along with the tender documents through Pay Order/Bank Draft favoring Agrani Bank Limited, Head Office, Dhaka from any branch of Agrani Bank Limited.	
	ii) If it is not possible to receive /open the tender on the schedule date & time for any unavoidable circumstances the same will be received /open on the next working date at the same time & same venue.	
	iii) All submitted documents must be signed by the tenderer in every page of tender. All photo copy must be attested as per prevailing Laws & Rules.	
	iv) If the Tenderer submits any false/incorrect or forged certificate, action may be taken as per PPA-2006 and PPR-2008 and its amendments.	
	v) The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all Tenders prior to acceptance without assigning any reason, Agrani Bank Limited shall not be under any obligation to accept the lowest tender.	

(Mohammad Yousuf Khan)  
Deputy General Manager