

For immediate release

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"STOP THE WAR ON JOURNALISM: Free Julian Assange" at the world famous Perugia Journalism Festival

"STOP WAR ON JOURNALISM: Free Julian Assange" is the title of the three "off" events that *Activists for Assange* will bring to the International Journalism Festival (#ijf24) in Perugia, Italy, to be held from April 17 to 21.

The three "off" events are:

- four days of leafleting at the entrance to the dozen or so halls that will host conferences for the thousands of Italian and foreign journalists attending #ijf24; the activists' base camp will be in Piazza IV Novembre in front of the Palazzo dei Priori;
- a press conference to be held on April 19 at 11 a.m. next to the iconic newspaper kiosk at Porta Pesa, now closed but once a meeting place for the people of Perugia to read (and comment on) the front pages of the newspapers on display at the newsstand;
- a meeting at the Perugia headquarters of ANPI, Bonfigli Romovic chapter, in Via del Cortone 19 (a side street of Corso Cavour) on April 20 at 5:30 p.m., during which a TED interview of Julian Assange, made by Chris Anderson in 2010, will be screened; in it, the co-founder of the WikiLeaks website offers a very vivid 360-degree portrait of himself. The short will be followed by a panel discussion among four journalism experts called upon to answer the question, "Is Julian Assange a journalist?"

They are: Vincenzo Vita, journalist for *Il Manifesto* and *Articolo 21*; Sara Chessa, independent journalist and author of the book "Destroying Assange... to Put an End to Press Freedom," Ed. Castelvecchi; Tina Marinari, Coordinator of the campaigns undertaken by Amnesty International Italy for a free and independent press; and Mauro Volpi, Constitutionalist and expert on the Assange case. Gianni Magini of AllertaMedia will moderate the discussion.

Supporting the four-day initiative are the Perugia ANPI chapter, Amnesty International Italia, Turba, AllertaMedia and Liberi Edizioni.

Why all these "off" initiatives during the world famous Journalism Festival?

The answer is simple. Although the Festival talked about Assange in 2022, in the past two years he has been left in oblivion – as if there were no longer any problem about incarcerating, in our democratic society, an investigative journalist who is guilty only of doing his job. What is more,

keeping him in solitary confinement, for the past five years, in London's dreaded Belmarsh prison, while British judges decide whether or not Assange may be extradited to the United States where up to 175 years of maximum security prison await him.

The charges against Assange, which the Department of Justice is pursuing with a fury that smacks of revenge, center on the Australian journalist and publisher's revelation of secret material that has made the world aware of war crimes committed by the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. Of course, the Supreme Court in 1971 authorized journalists – unequivocally – to disclose secret documents when doing so does not compromise national security and is in the public interest. And so, given that fact, Assange was clearly doing no more than exercising his journalistic right to report misdeeds that had been hushed up. However, the U.S. Attorney General is not of that opinion and has sought to circumvent the Court's ruling by indicting Assange under the 1917 Espionage Act, which does not allow the defendant to invoke the public interest criterion. This is blatant legal trickery, no doubt, and a ploy that could create a very dangerous precedent for every journalist in the world – and, indeed, for us all.

For if Assange, whether as a journalist or ordinary citizen, does not have the right to make public secret material which would be for the general good to divulge, then we can say goodbye to freedom of the press and freedom of expression. In the future, no investigative journalist anywhere will dare to reveal facts kept secret by the U.S. government; otherwise, he or she would risk being extradited by Washington and locked up for life in a U.S. maximum security prison.

Thus the great relevance of the Assange case for the participants of the Journalism Festival in Perugia – even if the organizers do not seem to see that relevance. To pierce their curtain of silence, *Activists for Assange* will be bringing to #ijf24 the case of Julian Assange – an award-winning journalist shamefully disowned by so many of his colleagues.