

PRITI PATEL APPROVES JULIAN ASSANGE'S EXTRADITION

As expected, this morning UK Home Secretary approved the extradition warrant for Julian Assange. In a statement, the Home Office described that Assange's extradition didn't raise any of the issues that she is asked to consider, like abuse of process or human rights.

"The UK courts have not found that it would be oppressive, unjust or an abuse of process to extradite Mr Assange. Nor have they found that extradition would be incompatible with his human rights, including his right to a fair trial and to freedom of expression, and that whilst in the US he will be treated appropriately, including in relation to his health."

Unsurprisingly, a number of entities purporting to defend the values of transparency embraced by the press, starting with Edward Snowden, have issued statements condemning the step without disclosing their own exposure in Assange's indictment. As they've done throughout this process, many of Assange's boosters are destroying the principles of journalism in order to save him.

That's a damned shame, because extradition on this indictment does pose a threat to journalism. The charges for publishing information, particularly those for publishing the names of US and Coalition informants, does pose a dangerous precedent.

Vanessa Baraitser's initial ruling finding this did not pose a threat to freedom of expression clearly distinguished Assange from what journalists do, partly by noting that soliciting hacks has always been tied to Assange's publication, and partly by noting EU privacy

protections would prohibit indiscriminate publication of names as Assange is accused of doing. But the latter distinction doesn't exist in US law. There are no such protections for privacy in the US.

For that reason, I'm more interested in what happens now that the UK has reached a final decision. After all, Joshua Schulte just caused to make available heavily redacted documents that almost certainly describe an ongoing investigation pertaining to WikiLeaks. In August, DOJ seemed to advocate delaying Schulte's trial (which started Monday), in anticipation of something like this.

Assange will avail himself of every possible appeal, so he won't be extradited for months or years anyway.

But because the final UK approval may trigger other actions, this may mark just a beginning in other ways.