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United States Mission to the OSCE

On the Case of Julian Assange

As delivered by Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Gregory Macris
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
March 5, 2020

The United States seeks to deter unauthorized disclosure of classified information, including via prosecution. This is done transparently and according to the laws of the United States. In 2013, Chelsea Manning was convicted by court martial for offenses that involved violations of her military oath to protect and defend the United States. As you know, she provided Julian Assange and WikiLeaks with hundreds of thousands of pages of security information related to national defense.

The U.S. Department of Justice indicted Julian Assange for his alleged complicity in Manning's actions, including his explicit solicitation of classified information and his encouraging Ms. Manning to remove classified information from U.S. systems.

The indictment also charges Assange for allegedly posting a subset of classified documents on WikiLeaks that identified the names of human sources, including local Afghans and Iraqis who were assisting U.S. forces, journalists, religious leaders, human rights advocates, and political dissidents living in repressive regimes, thereby causing grave and imminent risk to these individuals' lives and liberty.

The United States takes freedom of the press seriously and is thankful for the invaluable role journalists play in a free society. It is not and has never been the policy of the United States to target individuals for exercising their freedom of expression, including their reporting as journalists.

The United States seeks to prosecute Julian Assange for his alleged crimes, not for being a journalist. The totality of Assange's conduct as alleged in the indictment includes conspiring with and assisting Chelsea Manning in acquiring classified information, and publishing the names of human sources, recklessly placing them at grave risk.

As alleged in the indictment, no responsible actor—journalist or otherwise—would have behaved with such wanton disregard for the lives of others. The United States seeks to hold Julian Assange responsible for the full breadth of his illegal conduct in this case. In doing so, Mr. Assange will be provided all required constitutional and legal protections in compliance with U.S. domestic laws and our international obligations and commitments.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.