

Assange lands in Australia a free man

Julian Assange, **founder** of Wikileaks, returned to Australia after a **plea deal** freed him from a London prison. At Canberra Airport, he had an **emotional reunion** with his wife, Stella, and his father. Stella Assange stated that Julian needs time to **recover** and adjust to freedom.

For the past 14 years, Assange has been in a legal battle with US officials, accused of leaking **classified** documents that **allegedly** endangered lives. He did not attend a news conference in Canberra; instead, his wife and lawyer spoke on his behalf, emphasizing the need for family time.

Assange and Stella married in Belmarsh prison in 2022 and have two children. The plea deal had him plead guilty to one charge of **conspiracy** to obtain and disclose national defense information, instead of the original 18 charges. This was related to Wikileaks' 2010 release of a US military video and documents showing civilian deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan. These revelations sparked global reactions and intense **scrutiny** of US military actions.

Assange entered his plea in the Northern Mariana Islands, a US territory in the Pacific, two days after leaving Belmarsh prison. He was sentenced to time served and released to fly home. His lawyer, Jen Robinson, called the deal "criminalisation of journalism" and a "dangerous **precedent**." Stella Assange echoed this sentiment, hoping the media recognizes the threat to newsgathering and publishing truthful information.

Assange spent five years in Belmarsh Prison and seven years in Ecuador's London embassy, avoiding extradition to the US. He also faced rape and sexual assault charges in Sweden, which were dropped in 2019 due to the passage of time. Swedish women's rights groups regret he was never officially questioned over these allegations. Clara Berglund, head of the Swedish Women's Lobby, called it a "chapter of shame and betrayal" ending with his release.

Vocabulary and Definitions

1. **Founder** - A person who starts a company, organization, or initiative.

2. **Plea deal** - An agreement in a criminal case where the defendant pleads guilty to a lesser charge in exchange for a lighter sentence.
3. **Emotional** - Showing strong feelings.
4. **Reunion** - When people come together again after being apart.
5. **Recover** - To get better after an illness or difficult situation.
6. **Classified** - Officially secret and accessible only to authorized people.
7. **Allegedly** - Something that is claimed to be true but has not been proven.
8. **Conspiracy** - A secret plan by a group to do something unlawful or harmful.
9. **Scrutiny** - Close and detailed examination.
10. **Precedent** - An action or decision that serves as an example for future similar situations.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did Julian Assange return to Australia?
2. What was the result of Assange's plea deal?
3. How did Assange's wife and lawyer describe his current situation and needs?

True or False Questions

1. Julian Assange returned to Australia after a plea deal allowed him to leave a London prison.
2. Assange attended the news conference in Canberra.
3. The plea deal involved pleading guilty to 18 charges.
4. Wikileaks released documents showing civilian deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan.
5. Assange spent seven years hiding in Ecuador's London embassy.

Cloze Quiz

Julian Assange, _____ (1) of Wikileaks, returned to Australia after a plea deal freed him from a London prison. At Canberra Airport, he had an emotional _____ (2) with his wife, Stella, and his father. Stella Assange stated that Julian needs time to recover and adjust to _____ (3).

For the past 14 years, Assange has been in a legal battle with US officials, _____ (4) of leaking classified documents that allegedly _____ (5) lives. He did not attend a news conference in Canberra; instead, his wife and lawyer spoke on his behalf, _____ (6) the need for family time.

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Assange spent five years in Belmarsh Prison and seven years in Ecuador's London embassy, avoiding _____ (9) to the US. He also faced rape and sexual assault charges in Sweden, which were dropped in 2019 due to the passage of time. Swedish women's rights groups regret he was never officially questioned over these _____ (10). Clara Berglund, head of the Swedish Women's Lobby, called it a "chapter of shame and betrayal" ending with his release.

Quiz Answers

True or False Questions:

1. Julian Assange returned to Australia after a plea deal allowed him to leave a London prison. (True)
2. Assange attended the news conference in Canberra. (False)
3. The plea deal involved pleading guilty to 18 charges. (False)
4. Wikileaks released documents showing civilian deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan. (True)
5. Assange spent seven years hiding in Ecuador's London embassy. (True)