# Julian Assange Released After Guilty Plea in Saipan Court



Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks, pleaded guilty to violating the Espionage Act in a U.S. federal court in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands, and was subsequently released on June 26, 2024. Assange's legal journey, which began with the 2010 release of classified U.S. defense documents, culminated in this remote U.S. territory situated approximately 3,000 kilometers north of Australia. The selection of Saipan for the hearing was influenced by its proximity to Assange's native Australia and his reluctance to travel to the U.S. mainland.

Upon release, Assange flew back to Australia, where he was welcomed by his family, including his wife and two young sons, who had traveled from London. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese had actively lobbied for Assange's release, describing the case as “dragged on for too long.” Assange's guilty plea and subsequent release have sparked debates about press freedom and the role of journalists, with some viewing his case as setting a concerning precedent.

Assange's father, John Shipton, and his supporters celebrated the end of the legal saga, expressing relief and anticipation for Assange's reintegration into family life. Despite the celebrations, concerns were raised about the implications for journalistic freedom. Australia, which has seen recent controversies involving journalists and whistleblowers, welcomed Assange back amid mixed sentiments about the relationship between Australia and the U.S. and its impact on press freedom.