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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 24, 2019

Media Coalition Statement on the Indictment of Julian Assange

WASHINGTON — On Thursday, May 23, 2019, the U.S. Department of Justice announced a superseding indictment charging Wikileaks founder Julian Assange on 17 new counts of violating the Espionage Act, in addition to the one hacking conspiracy charge announced in April. The new charges are based on the receipt and disclosure of classified information provided to Assange by Chelsea Manning in 2010. In response, the News Media for Open Government (NMOG) made the following statement:

“Whether or not one considers Julian Assange a journalist, this indictment crossed a line that has larger implications for the media, journalists, and the public. The acts of newsgathering and publication are protected by the First Amendment. The government’s use of the Espionage Act to criminalize the receipt and publication of classified information sets a dangerous precedent for journalism and raises significant constitutional concerns.”

NMOG members have worked together in a nonpartisan manner for over a decade to speak with a united voice to strengthen open government policies and practices. Members of NMOG include American Society of News Editors, The Associated Press, Association of Alternative Newsmedia, National Association of Broadcasters, National Newspaper Association, News Media Alliance, Online News Association, Radio Television Digital News Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and Society of Professional Journalists.

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