

Swedish prosecutor re-opens “rape” case against WikiLeaks’ Julian Assange

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The decision by a senior Swedish prosecutor to reopen the rape charges against WikiLeaks co-founder Julian Assange is a transparently political decision. There is every reason to believe this is part of a “dirty tricks” operation, originating in Washington, aimed at discrediting or destroying Assange and WikiLeaks. The *World Socialist Web Site* denounces the smear campaign and demands that it be halted.

On July 25 WikiLeaks posted some 92,000 US military documents covering the period January 2004 to December 2009, helping to expose the criminal and brutal nature of the conflict. The release infuriated the White House and the Pentagon, who have threatened the organization with criminal charges. The ultra-right in the US has called for Assange’s assassination.

WikiLeaks claims it has another 15,000 secret documents, which it intends to release in the near future. It is likely the campaign against Assange is directed toward pressuring WikiLeaks into turning over the files or undermining their ultimate release.

Everything about the affair in Sweden stinks to high heaven. On August 20 a junior prosecutor issued a warrant for Assange’s arrest on rape charges, involving complaints from two women. The following day, a more senior prosecutor examined the case file and ruled there was insufficient evidence for any such charges, although a parallel investigation into alleged “sexual molestation” was initiated. Assange agreed to an interview with Swedish police and the interview reportedly took place last week.

Prosecutor Marianne Ny announced Wednesday that the rape case was being taken up again. In an official

statement, Ny declared, “There is reason to believe that a crime has been committed. Considering information available at present, my judgement is that the classification of the crime is rape. The basis for further considerations is not sufficient at the moment. More investigations are necessary before a final decision can be made.”

The initial arrest warrant was issued August 20 on the basis of evidence given over the phone by police to the on-call prosecutor, on the grounds that Assange was a foreign national and about to leave the country. In fact, Assange has applied for residency in Sweden.

A group dedicated to civil liberties, the Organisation for Safe Legal Proceedings, has reported the original prosecutor to Sweden’s ombudsman. A spokesman for the group, Johann Binninge, told CNN, “When accusations come in, prosecutors don’t even check facts before they take coercive measures, and this is contrary to Swedish laws. In this case, the prosecutor only listened to one individual’s story but didn’t bother checking the other side of the story before accusing Mr. Assange of a very serious crime. This is why we have reported her.”

Moreover, there is the almost instantaneous leak of the charges to the right-wing press and the announcement of Assange’s identity by the authorities, in violation of Swedish law. According to the prosecution authority, news reached a Swedish tabloid, but “the authority does not know how this happened, and the authority is not allowed to investigate this.”

The decision to reopen the rape case followed an appeal by Claes Borgström, the lawyer for the two

women. Borgström is a prominent attorney and Social Democratic politician. He served in the Swedish government as Equal Opportunities Ombudsman from 2000-2007 and operates a law firm in partnership with Social Democratic politician and former Minister for Justice Thomas Bodström. Bodström is the son of former Foreign Affairs Minister Lennart Bodström, also a Social Democrat.

A Social Democratic government in Stockholm, under Göran Persson, supported the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and dispatched 500 Swedish troops to the conflict in early 2002. The party's current leader, Mona Sahlin, visited Afghanistan in late July. She told news agency TT, "As a responsible politician and leader of the Social Democrats, it is my duty to come here when we send so many men and women here. It is important for me to hold talks on the spot."

It is worth noting that the Swedish Social Democrats' Olof Palme International Centre is affiliated with the National Endowment for Democracy in the US, a well-known center of CIA funding and activity.

Borgström denied his female clients were part of a conspiracy. "This had nothing whatsoever to do with the Pentagon or the CIA," he told the *Financial Times*. Asked by CNN whether the Department of Defense had anything to do with the allegations against Assange, a Pentagon spokesman, Dean Boyd, commented, "No, that's ridiculous."

A lawyer for Assange, Leif Silbersky, told the media that his client strongly denies the charges. "His view is that he has not done anything that is morally and legally wrong," said Silbersky. Assange told *Al Jazeera* Sunday that the rape allegations are "clearly part of a smear campaign ... The only question is, who was involved?" He told a Swedish daily paper this past weekend that "we have been warned that, for example, the Pentagon is planning on using dirty tricks to destroy our work." He said he was also warned about "sex traps." Had he fallen for one of those? "Maybe. Maybe not," Assange replied.

If the details of the episodes reported in the media are anything to go by, the incidents have nothing to do with

sexual assault. The two women, one of whom is associated with the Christian wing of the Social Democratic Party, have acknowledged having consensual sex with Assange during his recent tour of Sweden. The charges reportedly involve other aspects of the encounters, including his supposed refusal to submit to testing for sexual diseases. Swedish laws on rape and sexual molestation are very broad.

Moreover, the facts as reported by the *Daily Mail* in Britain become even more peculiar when it comes to how the two women, involved independently with Assange, according to their lawyer, got together to press charges. According to the newspaper, "The drama took a bizarre and ultimately sensational turn after she [the second woman] called the office of Woman A, whom she had briefly met at the seminar. The two women talked and realised to their horror and anger that they had both been victims of his charm." Pardon us, if we don't believe a word of this.

The WSWS calls for a campaign in defense of Assange and WikiLeaks, and the dropping of all charges against Private Bradley Manning, accused of leaking the documents to WikiLeaks. Top officials in Washington will stop at nothing to prevent the truth from emerging about their crimes in Afghanistan.



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