

WikiLeaks' editor Julian Assange threatened with arrest

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21 June 2012

WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange remains inside the Ecuadorian embassy in London after seeking asylum under the United Nations Human Rights Declaration on Tuesday. The 40-year-old Australian citizen, who has not been charged with a crime in any country, faces extradition to Sweden on June 28 for questioning about dubious sexual assault allegations.

While the British Foreign Office said the Ecuadorian embassy was diplomatic territory and “beyond the reach of the police,” Scotland Yard insisted that Assange had breached his bail conditions and would be immediately arrested if he left the premises.

One of the conditions imposed on Assange, who was arrested on a European extradition warrant in December 2010, was that he remain at a specified address between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m. Police have been mobilised outside the embassy. Several officers briefly entered the building yesterday.

According to yesterday's *New York Times*, an international “red notice” for Assange—authorising his arrest anywhere in the world—will remain in effect until Sweden revokes it.

Assange's asylum application states that he was forced to seek asylum in Ecuador because he had been “abandoned” by Australia's Labor government in the face of escalating attacks on his legal and democratic rights by the UK, Swedish and US governments.

If Assange is extradited to Sweden, he is likely to be denied bail and held incommunicado pending any trial. From there, the WikiLeaks editor could be easily extradited to the US, where the Obama administration

has prepared a secret grand jury indictment on espionage charges. These charges relate to the publication of tens of thousands of secret documents exposing US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan and official cables revealing diplomatic intrigues by the US and other governments.

Ecuadorian Ambassador Anna Alban issued a statement yesterday proclaiming her country's “long and well-established tradition of supporting human rights.” Yet she said Ecuador had no “intention of interfering with the processes of either the UK or Swedish governments.”

Ecuador's deputy foreign minister, Marco Albuja, told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation this morning that President Rafael Correa would announce his government's decision on the Assange asylum bid within 24 hours.

The British, American and Swedish media continue to denigrate Assange and downplay the anti-democratic witchhunt against him. A comment in Britain's *Guardian* newspaper today insisted that “general international law does not recognise a right of diplomatic asylum.” There is an obvious contrast between these claims and the favourable coverage recently given to blind Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng. Chen sought sanctuary in the American embassy in Beijing in April and was later granted asylum and safe passage to the US.

A leaked email from the American intelligence and security company Stratfor last year confirmed the existence of a US grand jury indictment against Assange, issued in December 2010. Nevertheless, the

Australian government, which has been centrally involved in the operation against Assange, continues to pretend that the indictment does not exist.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard and her foreign minister Bob Carr claimed yesterday that the US had “no interest” in extraditing the WikiLeaks editor. Questioned on the ABC-TV program “Lateline,” Carr said he did not even know what a sealed grand jury indictment was. Carr refused to say whether he considered Assange a journalist, and falsely claimed that the Australian government had provided consular legal assistance to the Australian citizen. (See: “The Australian Labor government—a key accomplice in the vendetta against Julian Assange”)

Human rights lawyer Jennifer Robinson, who has previously provided Assange with legal advice, told the media yesterday that the WikiLeaks editor’s decision to seek asylum in Ecuador had been “carefully considered.” Tunisia, she said, had also offered him asylum.

Assange may have sought asylum in Ecuador because its extradition treaty with the US reportedly does not permit extradition to face political charges. By contrast, the Gillard government recently secured an amendment to Australian legislation to allow for political extraditions to selected countries, including the US. The Greens, whose votes keep the minority Labor government in power, did not oppose the amendment.

In comments to the media, Christine Assange, the WikiLeaks editor’s mother, denounced the Gillard administration as a US “puppet” for refusing to defend her son. “[T]hey’ve done nothing,” she said. “In fact, they’ve aided and abetted the US in persecuting my son.”



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