

Sweden drops bogus investigation, but Julian Assange threatened with extradition to US

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Speaking from the balcony of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London yesterday, WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange said the “proper war is just commencing.”

Speaking in the aftermath of the Swedish Prosecution Authority dropping their investigation into bogus allegations of sexual assault, he added, “Today is an important victory for me and for the UN’s human rights system but it by no means erases the years of detention without charge in prison, under house arrest and almost five years here in this embassy without sunlight, seven years without charge while my children grew up without me. And that is not something I can forget, it is not something I can forgive.”

Assange has been confined to the embassy since being granted diplomatic asylum in 2012, in response to the trampling of his democratic rights by the Swedish and UK authorities.

The attempt to frame him on allegations relating to a 2010 visit to Sweden was the highpoint of a politically motivated manhunt launched following WikiLeaks’ publication of masses of documents revealing the criminal and illegal activities of the US and other imperialist governments in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world. The Obama administration moved to prosecute Assange and WikiLeaks, convening a secret grand jury.

Dropping the case Swedish prosecutor Marianne Ny said, “In order to proceed with the case, Julian Assange would have to be formally notified of the criminal suspicions against him. We cannot expect to receive assistance from Ecuador regarding this. Therefore the investigation is discontinued.”

Ny’s reference to Ecuador concerns the election of Lenín Moreno as president, the hand-picked successor of outgoing President Rafael Correa, at the beginning of April. Moreno’s opponent, the banker Guillermo

Lasso, had pledged to deny Assange asylum and remove him from the London embassy within 30 days. Moreno pledged that Assange would be allowed to remain.

Following Sweden’s decision, the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) under which Assange was arbitrarily originally arrested—without charges being brought against him—was discharged at Westminster Magistrates Court.

Ny refused to state that Sweden would end its persecution of Assange. The statute of limitations on his case expires in 2020, she said, before warning, “If he, at a later date, makes himself available, I will be able to decide to resume the investigation immediately.”

Ny asserted of Assange, “He has tried to dodge all attempts to avoid Swedish and British legal authorities.” This is a filthy lie. It was not until last November, six years after he was first detained in London, that Sweden even took a statement from Assange, despite offered cooperation from the start.

Assange remains in immediate danger. There is no innocent explanation as to why Sweden has discontinued its investigation at this juncture, after spending seven years relentlessly hounding Assange. The case against him was concocted in order that he could be sent from Sweden to the US.

The decision to end the investigation has been taken under Washington’s orders. Last month, it emerged that the Department of Justice had prepared the charges under which it intends to have Assange arrested and extradited to the US. CNN reported that US officials said they had “proof that WikiLeaks played an active role in helping Edward Snowden, a former NSA analyst, disclose a massive cache of classified documents.”

Asked at an April 20 press conference if the Justice Department intended to arrest Assange “once and for all,” Attorney General Jeff Sessions said, “Yes, it is a priority. We’ve already begun stepping up our efforts and whenever a case can be made, we will seek to put some people in jail.”

Sessions’ comments came just a week after CIA Director Mike Pompeo made a speech in which he denounced Assange and Snowden and said WikiLeaks was “a non-state hostile intelligence service often abetted by state actors like Russia.”

News organizations that reveal government secrets and crimes are “enemies” of the United States, said Pompeo, adding that individuals who leak secret information about US crimes are guilty of “treason.” He declared, “We have to recognize that we can no longer allow Assange and his colleagues the latitude to use free speech values against us.”

In response, a British Home Office source told the *Guardian* its existing legal obligation was to extradite Assange to Sweden under the EAW. Extradition requests from outside the UK are facilitated under the Extradition Act 2003, which stipulates that if there are competing warrants from two countries, the home secretary must decide which takes precedence.

With Sweden discontinuing its investigation, the way is paved for the US to request extradition, though it is likely that this has already been done. The *Guardian* noted, “The Home Office never confirms whether an extradition request has been made or received until the person in question has been arrested, the source indicated ...”

The UK authorities have made clear that, despite the warrant against him now being void, Assange will be immediately arrested if he sets foot outside the embassy. This is to be carried out by the Metropolitan Police utilising an alleged breach of bail offense, dating back to 2012, ordered by Westminster Magistrates Court.

Yesterday, the Met said Assange failed to surrender to the court on June 29, 2012 and it “is obliged to execute the warrant should he leave the embassy.”

Following Sweden’s decision, police officers in a car remained parked opposite the embassy. Other police cars and officers were on standby.

While speaking at a Conservative Party general election event in Edinburgh Friday, Prime Minister

Theresa May refused to rule out Assange’s extradition to the US. Questioned if the UK would support a US request, she said, “We look at extradition requests on a case-by-case basis.” May added, “In relation to Julian Assange, any decision that is taken about UK action in relation to him were he to leave the Ecuadorian embassy would be an operational matter for the police.”

This is a ludicrous assertion. As home secretary for virtually the entire time Assange was incarcerated by the British state (May 2010 to July 2016), May’s department played a critical role in collusion with Sweden and the US in denying elementary justice to Assange.

The investigative journalist Glenn Greenwald, a long-time supporter of Assange who also assisted Snowden in making public documents revealing the US and British government’s mass surveillance of the world’s population, warned Friday that Assange remained in danger.

Greenwald wrote, “The termination of the Swedish investigation is, in one sense, good news for Assange. But it is unlikely to change his inability to leave the embassy any time soon. If anything, given the apparent determination of the Trump administration to put him in a US prison cell for the ‘crime’ of publishing documents, his freedom appears farther away than it has since 2010, when the Swedish case began.”



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