

# New report reveals Assange under 24/7 surveillance in Ecuadoran embassy

Eric London  
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On Monday, the Spanish newspaper *El Diario* exposed previously unknown facts about the Ecuadoran government's illegal surveillance of WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange. For the last year of his stay in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, the government of both current president Lenín Moreno and predecessor Rafael Correa "spied on every movement of Julian Assange in its embassy in London," *El Diario* reports.

The *El Diario* report is based on new documents obtained from UC Global Security Consulting, the firm contracted by the Ecuadoran government to spy on Assange under the guise of "protecting" him.

The report reveals that Ecuador substantially heightened its efforts to spy on Assange, subjecting him to 24/7 surveillance "between April 2017 and the end of February 2018 in his London refuge, according to unsigned intelligence reports of the Ecuadoran government labeled 'confidential.'" In March, Ecuador cut Assange's access to the Internet and telephone, effectively blocking him from communicating with the outside world.

*El Diario* reports: "The acts of the security company were not limited to detailing incidents that were registered during these dates [between April 2017 and February 2018] on the outside of the embassy, where there were gatherings and a small demonstration, but also detailed and photographed what occurred inside the government building, where a network of security cameras registered all of Assange's activity. These images were sent to screens located in an apartment located 100 meters from the embassy in one of the most expensive neighborhoods in London."

The report indicates that Assange was monitored as he moved from room to room and that security contractors watched him on a "live" feed. Reports from UC Global Security Consulting warned the Ecuadoran

government that Assange was meeting with supporters of the Catalan independence movement and that such meetings could damage relations between Ecuador and Spain.

*El Diario* also noted that the intelligence reports compiled about Assange were rife with false information about Assange and the people with whom he met:

"The intelligence reports to which eldiario.es has had access are filled with errors and incorrect statements. Some names of visitors Assange received are not correct, there are misspellings and on some documents, and the Ecuadoran embassy is referred to as the Colombian Embassy. There are also mistakes in identifying the people with whom the WikiLeaks founder has access, like when the report speaks of Renata Avila, who it refers to as one of his Spanish lawyers from the office of Baltasar Garzon. Avila is not Spanish and she is not a lawyer in Garzon's office."

The revelation that intelligence reports included false information about Assange and his connections is a major blow to efforts to portray Assange as a shadowy manipulator. The international pressure campaign against Assange, led by the US government with support from its British allies, has focused on Assange's alleged connections to various Russians and Trump representatives. The Democratic Party is currently suing Assange and WikiLeaks, claiming he illegally manipulated the outcome of the 2016 election.

The Ecuadoran government has likewise justified its decision to cut off Assange's right to communicate with the outside world by fraudulently claiming he was both attempting to "hack" the Ecuadoran embassy as well as to sabotage Ecuadoran foreign relations. But the *El Diario* report shows the intelligence reports compiled on Assange are based on lies and falsehoods.

The *El Diario* report underscores the urgent danger Australian government is its commitment to the protection of the human rights of its citizens, including internationally recognized legal and democratic norms such as free speech, the right of due process, freedom from cruel and degrading treatment, and the right not to be punished in the absence of a criminal act.” To this must be added his right to asylum free of illegal retribution by his host country.

The fact that it was the government of Rafael Correa that initially ordered closer surveillance of Assange in 2017 also shows Assange has little reason to count on support from the Correa faction of the ruling Alianza PAIS party.

The bourgeois press in Ecuador is demanding that incoming Foreign Minister Jose Valencia, who replaced outgoing minister Maria Fernanda Espinosa on June 11, take measures to handle “the Assange case.” The right-wing *El Comercio* praised Valencia’s appointment as a sign that the Ecuadoran government is returning control over foreign affairs to career diplomats rather than Alianza PAIS loyalists.

*El Comercio* reported on June 8 that one of Valencia’s top priorities must include solving the Assange “problem,” which is “generating political and economic obstacles” and must be dealt with “quickly.” Valencia most recently served as Ecuador’s representative to the US-dominated Organization of American States (OAS). He was educated in the United States and received a master’s degree from Harvard Kennedy School of Government.

The round-the-clock surveillance of Assange is in clear violation of international law, specifically the right to asylum. The 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention bars vindictive restrictions on fundamental rights like those being carried out by Ecuador against Assange.

Article 26 of the convention bars host countries from blocking “free movement” of asylees, Article 15 guarantees the right to association and Article 16 guarantees access to the courts. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights, a body to which Ecuador is subject, has established that “the right of due process of law is a right that must be ensured to everyone, irrespective of his migratory status.”

These violations of international law further underscore the obligation of the Australian government to intervene on Assange’s behalf. Under the legal principle of diplomatic protection, Australia must protect the rights of its own citizens abroad. As the WSWS wrote on June 11, “The issue at stake for the

On Sunday, June 17, the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) is hosting a demonstration at 1:00 p.m. at Sydney Town Hall to demand the Turnbull government honor its obligations under international law by intervening to secure Assange’s right to return to Australia unmolested. We encourage all readers to join the demonstration and similar vigils and protests being held internationally in defense of Assange.



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