

Former Ecuadorian consul Fidel Narváez denounces search and confiscation of Assange's possessions

Our reporter
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“It’s against any legal provisions in Ecuador and internationally”

The World Socialist Web Site spoke to Fidel Narváez, former consul at the Ecuadorian embassy, who was among protesters opposing plans for the police to search and confiscate the possessions of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange.

Narváez said: “What is happening today is basically the continuation of an illegal and immoral cooperation between Ecuador and United States. As you know, Julian Assange had political asylum granted by Ecuador, and therefore Ecuador should not take part in an investigation being carried out by persecutors of a political refugee.

“In January/February this year American prosecutors interviewed Ecuadorian diplomats who have worked in this embassy in the last few years. They interviewed them in Quito and they interviewed them in London on the investigation about Julian. That was prior to Ecuador ending asylum for Assange in April. Now they are going to seize Julian’s belongings, his computers, his data, his devices, his documents and his files with his lawyers. Anything is possible, anything that is there is suitable to be taken by the Americans. This is illegal, as no judge has determined that they have the right to do it, and it’s outrageous!”

Asked about how international law and due process is being flouted, Narváez replied: “There is no legal backing at all. It’s against any legal provisions in Ecuador and internationally. But nowadays, it doesn’t matter! As we have seen in many cases and especially in this case, the only thing that matters is the will of the

United States.”

A WSWWS reporter pointed out that before Assange was illegally seized, Narváez had stated in a press conference—alongside WikiLeaks Editor-in-Chief Kristinn Hrafnsson—that the only way Assange could get justice was through “international solidarity.”

Narváez replied: “I still believe that ultimately, the decision to extradite him to the US will be a political decision, independently of what the courts decide. I have hope that the courts will stand up to this and will decide that no journalist should be extradited for journalistic activities, But it is up to the British government finally to decide if they go ahead with that extradition.

“Ultimately it is going to be a political decision, but let’s not forget the very recent case of [the fascist Chilean dictator] General [Augusto] Pinochet, in which there was the opposite position.

“The courts decided that Pinochet should be extradited to Spain, as requested at that time by the man who is Assange’s lawyer today, Baltasar Garzón. The [Labour Party] government of the UK decided to block this extradition in a political decision. Pinochet was not extradited to Spain and he flew back to Chile.

“So, this is going to be a political decision as well. We don’t know how long the whole judicial process will take, but hopefully by the time the final decision is made a different government will be in place in this country, and that gives us hope that he won’t be extradited.”

Asked about the implications of the US government and its intelligence agencies taking possession of documents and electronic files from Assange that could endanger other WikiLeaks staff and wreck WikiLeaks’

publishing plans and entire operations, Narváez replied: “Absolutely. It could be that some WikiLeaks sources could be exposed. It could be that his legal strategy, which should be confidential and protected, will be exposed. His medical records will be exposed.

“But not only that. My biggest fear is that, suddenly, unexpected things are going to appear. Because there is no transparency with this procedure. We are very afraid that either Ecuador on its own or in coordination with the US will plant fake evidence against Julian Assange.”

Narváez said that Assange had suffered terribly, mentally and physically, while being confined arbitrarily in the embassy by the UK authorities.

“I spent six years of the seven years that Julian was in this embassy with him. I was not here the last year, which I know was very difficult. It was the worst year for Julian. Because in the last year, Ecuador stopped protecting him and started harassing him, trying to break him down.

“He had a problem with one of his shoulders that needed to be properly scanned with special equipment that we couldn’t get into the embassy. He had dental care issues that were affecting him. His sight was affected because he couldn’t see long distances at all. He was exposed to artificial light 100 percent of the time. He couldn’t have sunlight.

“In that very last year, not only his health but also his emotional well-being were very much affected. Otherwise, he is a very strong man. Spiritually, his will is incredible.”

The WSWs spoke to two members of the Julian Assange Defence Committee who attended the protest.

Maxine said: “We are here today to protest against the seizure of Julian Assange’s belongings by the USA. By what right they are seizing those belongings I do not know. There should be many more people here protesting against what is happening.

“As far as I am concerned the US and UK governments are gangsters, thieves, murderers and torturers and Julian Assange exposed that and that is why they are persecuting him. We have to witness what is happening to Julian Assange and Chelsea Manning, who is back in prison now, to know just how ruthless and violent the rulers of these countries are. We must challenge it and we have to make sure that this does not

pass in silence.

“Julian Assange does not even have his address book with him, so he’s finding it difficult to write to the people he wants to write to. He’s being held in the most appalling conditions. He’s convicted of a bail offence, yet he’s in Britain’s high-security prison, Belmarsh, where normally the most extremely dangerous prisoners are held. And he is subjected to a regime of isolation and minimal contact with the outside world. If nothing else, that should make people protest about Julian Assange’s treatment. It is part of the pattern of unusual treatment for Julian Assange and he should be one of our heroes and so should Chelsea Manning.

“Chelsea Manning says, ‘I will not testify to that fake jury, I will not testify to them, I would rather starve to death.’ Those are the heroes of the movement that we need to build in this country. We have to make sure this silence gets broken and ask people very straight: Which side are you on? The American war machine or Julian Assange? And if you’re on the wrong side, then you are on the wrong side of history.

“Julian Assange has already been detained for many years now. Arbitrarily detained. His health, we know, has been deeply affected by that and now he is being isolated in a high-security prison. There is no reason for that to happen other than the ruthless wish to destroy him and to destroy WikiLeaks, so that when they go and have their war in Iran or elsewhere, there will be nobody to speak out publicly.”

Alberto said: “I have come to the Embassy today because I support the work of Julian Assange. I am outraged at what the Ecuadorian government is doing in handing over Julian’s personal belongings to the police so that they can be sent to the US government.

“It is a breach of his human rights. It is a theft of his belongings. It just shows you how far a right-wing government will go to satisfy the US imperialists.”



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