

How Ecuador's President Gave Up Assange

Lenin Moreno was desperate to ingratiate his government with Washington and distract the public from his mounting scandals, writes the *Grayzone's* Denis Rogatyuk.

By **Denis Rogatyuk**

Grayzone



The images of six Metropolitan police officers dragging Julian Assange out of the Ecuadorian embassy in London have enraged citizens around the world. Many have warned that if he is extradited to the U.S. for trial on conspiracy charges – and possibly much more if federal prosecutors have their way – it will lead to the criminalization of many standard journalistic practices. These scenes were only possible thanks to the transformation of Ecuador's government under the watch of President Lenin Moreno.

Since at least December 2018, Moreno has been working towards expelling the *Wikileaks* publisher from the embassy. The Ecuadorian president's behavior represents a stunning reversal of the policies of his predecessor, Rafael Correa, the defiantly progressive leader who authorized Assange's asylum back in 2012, and who now lives in exile.

While Ecuador's Foreign Minister Jose Valencia blamed his government's expulsion of Assange on the Australian journalist's "rudeness," the sellout is clearly a byproduct of Moreno's right-leaning agenda.

Political instability has swept across Ecuador since

revelations of widespread corruption in Moreno's inner circle emerged. The scandal coincided with Moreno's turn towards neoliberal economic reforms, from implementing a massive IMF loan package to the gradual and total embrace and support for U.S. foreign policy in the region. In his bid to satisfy Washington and deflect from his own problems, Moreno was all too eager to sacrifice Assange.

INA Papers Scandal

WikiLeaks's decision to re-publish the details of Moreno's use of off-shore bank accounts in Panama, titled "INA Papers" after the name of the shell corporation at the center of the scandal (INA Investment Corporation), appear to be the main cause for the president's decision to expel Assange from the embassy.

Ecuadorian Communications Minister Andrés Michelena went as far as claiming that the INA Papers were a conspiracy plot between Julian Assange, the former President Rafael Correa and the current Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

The INA Papers scandal has cast a long shadow on Moreno's regime and shattered its pledge to fight against institutional corruption. The scandal reveals that a close associate of Moreno, Xavier Macias, lobbied for the contract of the Coca Codo Sinclair hydroelectric power plant (valued at \$2.8 billion) as well as the ZAMORA 3000 MW plant to be awarded Sinohydro, a Chinese state-owned construction company.

The financial trail from the Chinese corporation passed through bank accounts in Panama belonging to INA Investment Corporation – a shell company originally founded in Belize,

a notable tax haven, by Edwin Moreno Garcés, the brother of the current president. The most crucial pieces of evidence indicate that the INA Investment funds were used to purchase a large apartment in Alicante, Spain, and a number of luxury items for Moreno and his family in Geneva, during his time as a special envoy on disability rights for the United Nations.

As the pressure mounted on Moreno, the attorney general of Ecuador issued a statement on March 19th, indicating that it had commenced an investigation into the INA Papers scandal involving the president and his family. Next, on March 27th, the National Assembly of Ecuador approved a vote in favor of investigating Moreno's alleged off-shore bank dealings in Panama. According to Ecuador Inmediato, 153 public service officials, along with all members of the National Assembly, were also included in the initial public hearing scheduled for April 1st.

The corruption scandal came amid a number of other prominent crises disrupting both the Moreno administration and the Ecuadorian economy. The local and regional elections of March 24th, as well as the election to the Council of Citizens' Participation and Social Control (CPCCS) on March 24th, have been riddled with a series of controversies and irregularities with regards to vote counts and allegations of fraud, including the attempts to invalidate null votes, disqualify and smear the candidates endorsed by ex-President Rafael Correa. The stunning lack of transparency and legitimacy was highlighted by a report of the mission of electoral observers of the Organisation of American States.

In an unusual twist, the U.S. ambassador, Todd Chapman, was spotted visiting the headquarters of Ecuador's National Electoral Council during the March 24th elections and allegedly participated as an official electoral observer in the elections. This display of interference was widely condemned on social media as illegal under the current electoral rules, which forbid foreign powers from playing any active role in the electoral process. But in Moreno's Ecuador, it was a perfect symbol of the new status quo.

IMF Deal

During the recent meeting of the executive board of the IMF, the financial body approved a loan package of \$4.2 billion to the government of Lenin Moreno for what it called a "more dynamic, sustainable, and inclusive economy for the benefit of all Ecuadorians." The agreement coincided with layoffs of over 10,000 public sector workers, in addition to the ongoing policy of slashing in public and social spending, a decrease in the minimum wage and the removal of secure work protections that marked the sharp neoliberal turn of the Ecuadorian government under Moreno.

The IMF deal coincided with the intensifying attempts by the Ecuadorian government to proceed with the expulsion of Julian Assange from its London embassy. His arrest therefore stands as a sign that Moreno is willing to give up any part of his country's sovereignty – political, diplomatic, or economic – to comply with the demands of international finance.

The same pattern has been seen in Moreno's increasing level of collaboration with the Trump administration and its

foreign policy in Latin America. From holding private meetings with former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, to publicly hosting Vice President Mike Pence in the Ecuadorian presidential palace, to authorizing the opening of a new "Security Cooperation Office" in place of the old U.S. military base in Manta, Moreno's embrace of Trump's "Monroeist" policy towards Latin America has become all too apparent.

At the same time, Moreno has gone to great lengths to undo the progress of Latin American unity and integration initiated by his predecessor and other progressive leaders in the region.

On March 13th, Moreno announced that Ecuador would leave the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), founded in 2008 by leaders of South America's so-called pink tide: Nestor Kirchner of Argentina, Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Lula Da Silva of Brazil. The project was inspired by the long-standing vision of Simon Bolivar who envisaged South America as a federation of republics. UNASUR was meant to consolidate the growing economic and political integration among the increasingly progressive governments across the region, ultimately emulating the current structure of the European Union.

Moreno complained in his press release that UNASUR has been compromised by the lack of participation of the right-leaning governments in the region, as well as what he called, "irresponsible actions of certain leaders that replicated the worst vices of socialism of the 21st Century."

In a manner similar to Francisco Santander and the project

of Gran Colombia during the 1820s, Moreno has opted for a pro-U.S. foreign policy and commercial relations based on free trade and economic liberalization. He has also followed the path of other right-wing leaders in the region such as Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro and Argentina's Mauricio Macri in officially recognizing Juan Guaidó as the president of Venezuela. Moreno was even among the attendees of the founding summit of Prosur, a newly convened regional bloc of U.S.-aligned neoliberal governments.

Moreno's decision to silence Julian Assange and expel him enabled the president to gain the trust of the Trump administration while distracting the Ecuadorian public and international media from his mounting crises at home. From corrupt dealing in off-shore bank accounts, the fraudulent elections of March 24th and his mishandling of the Ecuadorian economy, Moreno is in a world of trouble.

This has not escaped the notice of Correa, Ecuador's former president. After having his page blocked on Facebook, Correa stated that "In his hatred, because Wikileaks published corruption of INA papers, Moreno wanted to destroy Assange's life. He probably did it, but he has also done a huge damage to the country. Who will trust in ECUADOR again?"

Overall, Ecuador has come to resemble the neoliberal regimes of the 1990s across the continent, with IMF-sanctioned austerity, increasingly unstable state institutions and an almost complete obedience to the U.S. foreign policy in the region becoming the new policy standard. Handing Assange over for possible extradition to the U.S. was the inevitable result of Moreno's turn to the right, but it is hardly the

end of his sell out.

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CHRIS HEDGES: The Martyrdom of Julian Assange

Assange and *WikiLeaks* allowed us to see the inner workings of empire – the most important role of a press – and for this they became empire's prey, writes Chris Hedges of Truthdig.

By **Chris Hedges**

Truthdig



The arrest Thursday of Julian Assange eviscerates all pretense of the rule of law and the rights of a free press. The illegalities, embraced by the Ecuadorian, British and U.S. governments, in the seizure of Assange are ominous. They presage a world where the internal workings, abuses, corruption, lies and crimes, especially war crimes, carried out by corporate states and the global ruling elite will be masked from the public. They presage a world where those with the courage and integrity to expose the misuse of power will be hunted down, tortured, subjected to sham trials and given lifetime prison terms in

solitary confinement. They presage an Orwellian dystopia where news is replaced with propaganda, trivia and entertainment. The arrest of Assange, I fear, marks the official beginning of the corporate totalitarianism that will define our lives.

Under what law did Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno capriciously terminate Julian Assange's rights of asylum as a political refugee? Under what law did Moreno authorize British police to enter the Ecuadorian Embassy – diplomatically sanctioned sovereign territory – to arrest a naturalized citizen of Ecuador? Under what law did Prime Minister Theresa May order the British police to grab Assange, who has never committed a crime? Under what law did President Donald Trump demand the extradition of Assange, who is not a U.S. citizen and whose news organization is not based in the United States?

I am sure government attorneys are skillfully doing what has become de rigueur for the corporate state, using specious legal arguments to eviscerate enshrined rights by judicial fiat. This is how we have the right to privacy with no privacy. This is how we have “free” elections funded by corporate money, covered by a compliant corporate media and under iron corporate control. This is how we have a legislative process in which corporate lobbyists write the legislation and corporate-indentured politicians vote it into law. This is how we have the right to due process with no due process. This is how we have a government – whose fundamental responsibility is to protect citizens – that orders and carries out the assassination of its own citizens such as the radical cleric Anwar al-Awlaki and his 16-year-

old son. This is how we have a press legally permitted to publish classified information and a publisher sitting in jail in Britain awaiting extradition to the United States and a whistleblower, Chelsea Manning, in a jail cell in the United States.

Britain will use as its legal cover for the arrest the extradition request from Washington based on conspiracy charges. This legal argument, in a functioning judiciary, would be thrown out of court. Unfortunately, we no longer have a functioning judiciary. We will soon know if Britain as well lacks one.

Refusing Safe Passage

Assange was granted asylum in the embassy in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden to answer questions about sexual offense allegations that were eventually dropped. Assange and his lawyers always argued that if he was put in Swedish custody he would be extradited to the United States. Once he was granted asylum and Ecuadorian citizenship the British government refused to grant Assange safe passage to the London airport, trapping him in the embassy for seven years as his health steadily deteriorated.

The Trump administration will seek to try Assange on charges that he conspired with Manning in 2010 to steal the Iraq and Afghanistan war logs obtained by *WikiLeaks*. The half a million internal documents leaked by Manning from the Pentagon and the State Department, along with the 2007 video of U.S. helicopter pilots nonchalantly gunning down Iraqi civilians, including children, and two *Reuters* journalists, provided copious evidence of the

hypocrisy, indiscriminate violence, and routine use of torture, lies, bribery and crude tactics of intimidation by the U.S. government in its foreign relations and wars in the Middle East. Assange and *WikiLeaks* allowed us to see the inner workings of empire—the most important role of a press—and for this they became empire’s prey.

U.S. government lawyers will attempt to separate *WikiLeaks* and Assange from *The New York Times* and the British newspaper *The Guardian*, both of which also published the leaked material from Manning, by implicating Assange in the theft of the documents. Manning was repeatedly and often brutally pressured during her detention and trial to implicate Assange in the seizure of the material, something she steadfastly refused to do. She is currently in jail because of her refusal to testify, without her lawyer, in front of the grand jury assembled for the Assange case. President Barack Obama granted Manning, who was given a 35-year sentence, clemency after she served seven years in a military prison.

Once the documents and videos provided by Manning to Assange and *WikiLeaks* were published and disseminated by news organizations such as *The New York Times* and *The Guardian*, the press callously, and foolishly, turned on Assange. News organizations that had run *WikiLeaks* material over several days soon served as conduits in a black propaganda campaign to discredit Assange and *WikiLeaks*. This coordinated smear campaign was detailed in a leaked Pentagon document prepared by the Cyber Counterintelligence Assessments Branch and dated March 8, 2008. The document called on the U.S. to eradicate the “feeling of trust” that is *WikiLeaks*’ “center

of gravity” and destroy Assange’s reputation.

Democrats’ Ire

Assange, who with the Manning leaks had exposed the war crimes, lies and criminal manipulations of the George W. Bush administration, soon earned the ire of the Democratic Party establishment by publishing 70,000 hacked emails belonging to the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and senior Democratic officials. The emails were copied from the accounts of John Podesta, Hillary Clinton’s campaign chairman. The Podesta emails exposed the donation of millions of dollars from Saudi Arabia and Qatar, two of the major funders of Islamic State, to the Clinton Foundation. It exposed the \$657,000 that Goldman Sachs paid to Hillary Clinton to give talks, a sum so large it can only be considered a bribe. It exposed Clinton’s repeated mendacity. She was caught in the emails, for example, telling the financial elites that she wanted “open trade and open borders” and believed Wall Street executives were best positioned to manage the economy, a statement that contradicted her campaign statements. It exposed the Clinton campaign’s efforts to influence the Republican primaries to ensure that Trump was the Republican nominee. It exposed Clinton’s advance knowledge of questions in a primary debate. It exposed Clinton as the primary architect of the war in Libya, a war she believed would burnish her credentials as a presidential candidate. Journalists can argue that this information, like the war logs, should have remained hidden, but they can’t then call themselves journalists.

The Democratic leadership, intent on blaming Russia for its

election loss, charges that the Podesta emails were obtained by Russian government hackers, although James Comey, the former FBI director, has conceded that the emails were probably delivered to *WikiLeaks* by an intermediary. Assange has said the emails were not provided by “state actors.”

WikiLeaks has done more to expose the abuses of power and crimes of the American Empire than any other news organization. In addition to the war logs and the Podesta emails, it made public the hacking tools used by the CIA and the National Security Agency and their interference in foreign elections, including in the French elections. It disclosed the internal conspiracy against British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn by Labour members of Parliament. It intervened to [save Edward Snowden](#), who made public the wholesale surveillance of the American public by our intelligence agencies, from extradition to the United States by helping him flee from Hong Kong to Moscow. The Snowden leaks also revealed that Assange was on a U.S. “manhunt target list.”

A haggard-looking Assange, as he was dragged out of the embassy by British police, shook his finger and shouted: “The U.K. must resist this attempt by the Trump administration. ... The U.K. must resist!”

We all must resist. We must, in every way possible, put pressure on the British government to halt the judicial lynching of Assange. If Assange is extradited and tried, it will create a legal precedent that will terminate the ability of the press, which Trump repeatedly has called “the enemy of the people,” to hold power accountable. The crimes of war and finance, the persecution of dissidents,

minorities and immigrants, the pillaging by corporations of the nation and the ecosystem and the ruthless impoverishment of working men and women to swell the bank accounts of the rich and consolidate the global oligarchs' total grip on power will not only expand, but will no longer be part of public debate. First Assange. Then us.

This [article](#) was originally published on Truthdig and is republished with permission.

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7 Years of Lies About Assange Won't Stop Now

One of the few towering figures of our time was reduced to nothing more than a sex pest and scruffy bail-skipper, writes Jonathan Cook.

By [Jonathan Cook](#)

[Jonathan-Cook.net](#)



For seven years, from the moment Julian Assange sought refuge in the Ecuadorean embassy in London, they have been telling us we were wrong, that we were paranoid conspiracy theorists. We were told there was no real threat of Assange's extradition

to the United States, that it was all in our fevered imaginations.

For seven years, we have had to listen to a chorus of journalists, politicians and “experts” telling us that Assange was nothing more than a fugitive from justice, and that the British and Swedish legal systems could be relied on to handle his case in full accordance with the law. Barely a “mainstream” voice was raised in his defense in all that time.

From the moment he sought asylum, Assange was cast as an outlaw. His work as the founder of *Wikileaks* – a digital platform that for the first time in history gave ordinary people a glimpse into the darkest recesses of the most secure vaults in the deepest of Deep States – was erased from the record.

Assange was reduced from one of the few towering figures of our time – a man who will have a central place in history books, if we as a species live long enough to write those books – to nothing more than a sex pest, and a scruffy bail-skipper.

The political and media class crafted a narrative of half-truths about the sex charges Assange was under investigation for in Sweden. They overlooked the fact that Assange had been allowed to leave Sweden by the original investigator, who dropped the charges, only for them to be revived by another investigator with a well-documented political agenda.

They failed to mention that Assange was always willing to be questioned by Swedish prosecutors in London, as had occurred

in dozens of other cases involving extradition proceedings to Sweden. It was almost as if Swedish officials did not want to test the evidence they claimed to have in their possession.

The media and political courtiers endlessly emphasized Assange's bail violation in the U.K., ignoring the fact that asylum seekers fleeing legal and political persecution don't usually honor bail conditions imposed by the very state authorities from which they are seeking asylum.

Ignoring Mounting Evidence

The political and media establishment ignored the mounting evidence of a secret grand jury in Virginia formulating charges against Assange, and ridiculed *Wikileaks'* concerns that the Swedish case might be cover for a more sinister attempt by the U.S. to extradite Assange and lock him away in a high-security prison, as had happened to whistleblower Chelsea Manning.

They belittled the 2016 verdict of a panel of United Nations legal scholars that the U.K. was "arbitrarily detaining" Assange. The media were more interested in the welfare of his cat.

They ignored the fact that after Ecuador changed presidents – with the new one keen to win favor with Washington – Assange was placed under more and more severe forms of solitary confinement. He was denied access to visitors and basic means of communications, violating both his asylum status and his human rights, and threatening his mental and physical wellbeing.

Equally, they ignored the fact that Assange had been given diplomatic status by Ecuador, as well as Ecuadorean citizenship. Britain was obligated to allow him to leave the embassy, using his diplomatic immunity, to travel unhindered to Ecuador. No “mainstream” journalist or politician thought this significant either.

They turned a blind eye to the news that, after refusing to question Assange in the U.K., Swedish prosecutors had decided to quietly drop the case against him in 2015. Sweden had kept the decision under wraps for more than two years.

It was a freedom of information request by an ally of Assange, not a media outlet, that unearthed documents showing that Swedish investigators had, in fact, wanted to drop the case against Assange back in 2013. The UK, however, insisted that they carry on with the charade so that Assange could remain locked up. A British official emailed the Swedes: “Don’t you dare get cold feet!!!”

Documents Destroyed

Most of the other documents relating to these conversations were unavailable. They had been destroyed by the U.K.’s Crown Prosecution Service in violation of protocol. But no one in the political and media establishment cared, of course.

Similarly, they ignored the fact that Assange was forced to hole up for years in the embassy, under the most intense form of house arrest, even though he no longer had a case to answer in Sweden. They told us – apparently in all seriousness – that he had to be arrested for his bail infraction, something that would normally be dealt with by a

fine.

And possibly most egregiously of all, most of the media refused to acknowledge that Assange was a journalist and publisher, even though by failing to do so they exposed themselves to the future use of the same draconian sanctions should they or their publications ever need to be silenced. They signed off on the right of the U.S. authorities to seize any foreign journalist, anywhere in the world, and lock him or her out of sight. They opened the door to a new, special form of rendition for journalists.

This was never about Sweden or bail violations, or even about the discredited Russia-gate narrative, as anyone who was paying the vaguest attention should have been able to work out. It was about the U.S. Deep State doing everything in its power to crush WikiLeaks and make an example of its founder.

It was about making sure there would never again be a leak like that of “Collateral Murder,” the military video released by *Wikileaks* in 2007 that showed U.S. soldiers celebrating as they murdered Iraqi civilians. It was about making sure there would never again be a dump of U.S. diplomatic cables, like those released in 2010 that revealed the secret machinations of the U.S. empire to dominate the planet whatever the cost in human rights violations.

Now the pretense is over. The British police invaded the diplomatic territory of Ecuador – invited in by Ecuador after it tore up Assange’s asylum status – to smuggle him off to jail. Two vassal states cooperating to do the bidding of the U.S. empire. The arrest was not to help two women in

Sweden or to enforce a minor bail infraction.

No, the British authorities were acting on an extradition warrant from the U.S. And the charges the U.S. authorities have concocted relate to Wikileaks' earliest work exposing the U.S. military's war crimes in Iraq – the stuff that we all once agreed was in the public interest, that British and U.S. media clamored to publish themselves.

Still the media and political class is turning a blind eye. Where is the outrage at the lies we have been served up for these past seven years? Where is the contrition at having been gulled for so long? Where is the fury at the most basic press freedom – the right to publish – being trashed to silence Assange? Where is the willingness finally to speak up in Assange's defense?

It's not there. There will be no indignation at the *BBC*, or the *Guardian*, or *CNN*. Just curious, impassive – even gently mocking – reporting of Assange's fate.

And that is because these journalists, politicians and experts never really believed anything they said. They knew all along that the U.S. wanted to silence Assange and to crush *Wikileaks*. They knew that all along and they didn't care. In fact, they happily conspired in paving the way for today's kidnapping of Assange.

They did so because they are not there to represent the truth, or to stand up for ordinary people, or to protect a free press, or even to enforce the rule of law. They don't care about any of that. They are there to protect their careers, and the system that rewards them with money and influence. They don't want an upstart like Assange kicking

over their applecart.

Now they will spin us a whole new set of deceptions and distractions about Assange to keep us anaesthetized, to keep us from being incensed as our rights are whittled away, and to prevent us from realizing that Assange's rights and our own are indivisible. We stand or fall together.

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Spanish Police Probe Extortion Scheme Involving Surveillance on Assange

UPDATED: Suspects are being investigated in Spain for having tried to extort €3 million from WikiLeaks in exchange for a huge cache of documents and surveillance videos of Assange inside Ecuador's London embassy, including with his doctors and lawyers.

By [Joe Lauria](#)

Special to Consortium News

A Spanish judge is investigating an alleged extortion scheme in which suspects in Madrid offered video and audio surveillance to the editor of WikiLeaks in exchange for €3 million, WikiLeaks said on Wednesday.

The surveillance was taken over the past year inside the Ecuador embassy in London where WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has legally been granted political asylum since 2012, said Kristinn Hrafnsson, the WikiLeaks editor, at a press conference in the British capital. Included in the

“trove” of material was a copy of a legal document regarding Assange’s defense strategy that was briefly left behind in a conference room in the embassy, Hrafnsson said.

“It is a grave and serious concern when legal meetings are being spied upon and legal documents are stolen,” he said. “That is something that not even prisoners have to endure.”

Assange was also filmed being examined by his doctor in the embassy, Hrafnsson said. “Nobody expected that this was recorded and stored and found its way to some dubious individuals in Spain,” he said.

Jennifer Robinson, Assange’s lawyer, called it a breach of attorney-client privilege. “The documents you have seen [presented at the press conference] demonstrates just how much surveillance he has been under and it is a breach of confidence for us, his lawyers, and his doctors to provide medical care in the embassy,” Robinson said. “This is a severe breach of attorney-client privilege and fundamentally undermines our ability to defend and provide defense to Julian Assange.”

Hrafnsson communicated with the alleged extortioners and was given samples of what they possessed, the WikiLeaks editor said. He then traveled to Spain and secretly videotaped a meeting with “four individuals” in which Hrafnsson learned the extent of the material that they possessed. They told him that €3 million was “a good deal” as they had had offers of €9 million for the material. Hrafnsson then went to the Spanish police who opened an investigation. He said he knew the identity of one of the four who had a prior conviction on similar charges and was seen as the “ringleader.”

Sting Operation

Aitor Martinez, the Assange lawyer who said he'd briefly left the legal document in the embassy conference room that was copied, then took part in a sting operation with the police. He wore a wire as he met with the alleged extortioners in Madrid, Hrafnsson said. A full investigation by a special extortion team was then opened and the case is now in the hands of an investigative judge, he said.

"Extortion is a serious matter," Hrafnsson said, "but of greater concern to me is that this is material gathered by spying by the government of Lenin Moreno and officials who work on his behalf against an individual who was granted diplomatic protection by the Ecuadorian government."

In an apparent reference to Moreno, Hrafnsson said: "We know from reports that this is the work of one person to service the interests of the United States government who want to indict and imprison a publisher for the crime of publishing truthful material."

Robinson said WikiLeaks would file a "fresh complaint" to the UN special rapporteur on privacy rights, who has said he will visit Assange on April 25. The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer will also visit Assange that day, WikiLeaks said.

Robinson criticized the British government for being poised to arrest and extradite Assange to the United States. "That a government would cooperate with another state to extradite a publisher for publishing truthful information outside its territory sets a dangerous precedent here in the UK and

elsewhere," she said. "No one can deny that risk. That is why he sought asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy."

Fidel Narváez, the former Ecuadorian consul at the embassy who said he saw Assange everyday for six years, told the press conference: "I very much hope that what we presented today will break the shield that currently the Ecuadorian government has built in my country...aided by the Ecuadorian press that is not doing what it should do to challenge and question the government." He added: "There is lots of misinformation about Julian's asylum but one thing is clear: the new government of Ecuador is not protecting Julian Assange anymore as it should."

Diplomat Fired

On Friday WikiLeaks tweeted that a "high-level" source in the Ecuador government told WikiLeaks that Assange's expulsion and arrest would come in "hours to days." That set off a worldwide reaction of Assange supporters as well as by UN special rapporteurs. Heavily armed police have roamed the environs of the embassy, and people in unmarked cars have been parked outside, either as a form of intimidation or on standby waiting for orders to move in.

"The only reason it hasn't happened yet is because of the international shame that will be attached to Ecuador if it does so," Narváez said. "The government is clearly building a case to end the asylum and what we've seen here is the basis for that."

Walk up to one of the "undercover" cars staking out the Ecuadorian embassy in London. This particular car has seen three shifts of different pairs of people over the last twenty hours. Engines running, lights on. Watcher makes call

under head cover. pic.twitter.com/e778EN0nU6 <https://t.co/cPfdib4kat>

– WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [April 9, 2019](#)

WikiLeaks on Tuesday said that Ecuador had fired a diplomat from the embassy, accusing him of being “close” to Assange. The tweet implied that the diplomat may have been WikiLeaks’s source about Assange’s imminent expulsion and arrest.

Ecuador: we just fired an official "close to Assange" for not being loyal

Ecuadorian statement comes after a leak that it was planning to hand Assange over to be arrested, violating his asylum, after US pressure and inducements, within "hours to days". <https://t.co/TH1qTFxVbm>

– WikiLeaks (@wikileaks) [April 9, 2019](#)

The central question that remains is who had access to the surveillance material and then transferred it to the alleged extortioners. “I don’t know very much about that,” Hrafnsson said. “I assume that will be part of the investigation by the Spanish police authorities and by the Spanish lawyers. However we do have more material that I recorded in Spain and it will possibly cast more light on that chain—how it ended up in Spain. We will make it available online shortly. [But] I don’t want to speculate how that came about.”

The Ecuadorian government had prime possession of surveillance and the British and U.S. governments could have also obtained it, given their close contacts with Ecuador on Assange. However there would be little apparent motive for these governments to have made the surveillance known.

“Let’s remember that Julian Assange is not serving a sentence, he doesn’t have charges,” Narváez said. “He is a

political refugee. Political refugees do not lose rights. On the contrary, they should have their rights protected.”

The following is the full video of the one-hour press conference held in London on Wednesday:

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Ecuador President Threatens to Decide Assange's Fate Over Scandal

Ecuador's president is threatening to soon decide on Julian Assange's refuge after his government falsely accused WikiLeaks of publishing files about a scandal that threatens to bring the president down, as Elizabeth Vos reports.

By [Elizabeth Vos](#)

Special to Consortium News



Ecuadorian President Lenin Moreno [said](#) Tuesday he would decide “in the short term” the fate of Julian Assange after claiming that WikiLeaks had “repeatedly violated” the terms of Assange’s asylum in Ecuador’s London embassy by commenting on a scandal linking a Panamanian investment company with Moreno and his family.

Those conditions, or [protocol](#), were imposed by Ecuador on

Assange in March 2018 and bar him from commenting publicly on political matters in exchange for being allowed to remain a refugee in the embassy. Assange never agreed to the protocol, which contradicts international refugee law guaranteeing freedom of expression. In addition there is no protocol on WikiLeaks, which still has a working Twitter account.

“Ecuador”s President Lenin Moreno stated today that Assange has ‘violated the ‘conditions’ of his asylum’ and that he will ‘take a decision’ ‘in the short term” after [@WikiLeaks](#) reported on the existence of the [#INAPapers](#) offshore corruption scandal wracking his government,” WikiLeaks tweeted Tuesday.

WikiLeaks had reported about the scandal allegedly involving Moreno and his family with INA Investments Corp, though WikiLeaks has not published any documents related to the case. Moreno’s spokesman, however, has implied that WikiLeaks has. A search of Wikileaks’ website shows no such files.

According to [Telesur English](#) the scandal came to light in February when Ecuadorian legislator Ronny Aleaga told reporters he had “received a dossier anonymously filled with documents that will implicate Lenin Moreno and his family in alleged crimes of corruption, perjury and money laundering.” The dossier has come to be known as the INA Papers.

The story was first reported by the Ecuadorian news outlet [La Fuente](#) in an article titled: “The Offshore Labyrinth of the Presidential Circle.” Ecuadorian [media](#) reported that the attorney general’s office has initiated a preliminary

investigation and that Aleaga would be summoned on Thursday to “give his version and acknowledge his complaint.”

The president of the National Assembly, Elizabeth Cabezas, has also come under investigation after allegedly trying to prevent an investigation into the scandal, the state-owned [El Universo](#) newspaper reported.

Blaming WikiLeaks

The embattled Moreno has lashed out at WikiLeaks and Assange.

“Ecuador’s Presidential spokesman claimed last night that Maduro, Assange and the country’s opposition leader, @MashiRafael are trying to bring down the government, after an embarrassing offshore and lavish spending scandal [@INAPapers / #INAPapers] arose,” WikiLeaks tweeted last week.

The Ecuadorian newspaper [el Telegrafo](#) reported:

“The Australian founded the WikiLeaks portal, which in the last days broadcast press releases and images of the private life of President Lenin Moreno. The leaks made by WikiLeaks on electronic communications of the president Lenin Moreno will motivate legal actions, on the international level, against the directors of said website, as announced by the Chancellor of Ecuador José Valencia.”

Moreno appears to have attempted to deflect from the growing scandal by using it as a pretext to blame WikiLeaks and expel Assange.

The former consul at the Ecuadorian embassy in London, [Fidel Narvaez](#), countered Moreno's [accusation](#) by saying that WikiLeaks never published the INA Papers, but merely tweeted about the subject.

Narvaez wrote:

“It is absurd that the government of Lenin Moreno intends to link Assange with publications of pages totally unrelated to Wikileaks, or with contents of the New York Times, and it would be ridiculous for the prosecution to investigate a “leak” that does not exist, but only in the false news published by the newspaper that you [Lenin Moreno] direct.”

He added: “Exactly one year ago, the government of Lenin Moreno has isolated Julian Assange in a regime that is almost a prison, who since then has not issued a single tweet. The government is looking for a pretext to end Julian's asylum and prepares the conditions to subject the country to historical humiliation.”

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In a separate [article](#), translated electronically, Narvaez argued: “Despite being an outrageous accusation, the farce has gone so far that the Ecuadorian National Assembly has issued a resolution to investigate Julian and that it emboldens the government to take measures to ‘Protect national interests.’ In short, the government seeks a false pretext to end the asylum and protection of Julian Assange.”

Attorney and author Eva Golinger, a Latin America analyst,

also wrote via [Twitter](#) (translated electronically): “This [accusation] is completely false. Wikileaks did not leak any document about the corruption of Lenin Moreno. They only sent a tweet referring to the evidence about the illicit actions of Lenin that had been published by other media. Blaming Assange is irresponsible.”

Golinger [added](#) in a separate tweet: “These false accusations are part of @Lenin’s efforts to justify the illegal rendition of Julian Assange to the United States. Since there is no legal basis for doing so, they are making things up. Dangerous, irresponsible and an abuse of human rights.”

Moreno’s accusations were echoed by major Ecuadorian news outlets such as [el Telegrafo](#), which reported that Ecuador’s secretary of communication had accused Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro of “financing the attacks of Julian Assange, to end the peace of Ecuador and the region, and even links the former Ecuadorian president in the plan.”

Last December, the [The New York Times](#) reported that in May 2017, Paul Manafort flew to Ecuador for negotiations with President Moreno, during which Moreno discussed handing over Assange in exchange for “concessions like debt relief from the United States.” The *Times* quoted “three people familiar with the talks, the details of which have not been previously reported.”

Assange sought and received asylum in the Ecuadorian embassy in London in June 2012. He fears that if he leaves the embassy he will be arrested for skipping bail and extradited to the United States for publishing classified documents. Under the previous government of President Rafael Correa,

the Ecuadorian government was largely supportive of Assange, an attitude that has shifted markedly under Moreno.

The INA Papers scandal has continued to weaken the already-unpopular Moreno government. Correa tweeted (translated electronically) on Sunday: “The end has arrived! There is despair in Carondelet [presidential palace]. In a matter of hours, Moreno will try to leave because of ‘health’ issues. The reality: he knows he is guilty. We have shown who the corrupt were always. I only apologize for trusting this rascal.”

Elizabeth Vos is a freelance journalist and contributor to Consortium News.

If you value this original article, please consider making a donation to Consortium News’s Spring Fundraising Drive so we can bring you more stories like this one.

A Year of Silencing Julian Assange

On this date in 2018, the Wikileaks publisher was cut off from the work of journalism, reports Elizabeth Vos.

By Elizabeth Vos

Special to Consortium News



One year ago Thursday, Ecuador's government under President Lenin Moreno silenced Julian Assange.

WikiLeaks wrote on [Twitter](#) Wednesday: "... March 28, marks one year that *WikiLeaks* publisher Julian Assange has been illegally gagged from doing journalism—any writing that expresses a 'political opinion'? even on his own treatment, after pressure from the U.S. on Ecuador."

On this date in 2018 Moreno imposed on Assange what Human Rights Watch's legal counsel Dinah Pokempner [described](#) as looking "more and more like solitary confinement." Moreno cut off Assange's online access and restricted visitors to the Ecuador embassy in London where Assange has had legal political asylum since 2012.

Moreno cited Assange's critical social media remarks about Ecuador's allies, the U.S. and Spain. Assange's near-total isolation, with the exception of visits from legal counsel during week days, has been augmented by the Ecuadorian government's imposition of a complex ["protocol,"](#) which, although eased slightly in recent months in respect of visits allowed, has not improved Assange's overall status over the last 12 months. In some respects, it seems to have worsened.

WikiLeaks' [Courage Foundation](#) described the terms of the protocol:

"Explicit threats to revoke Julian's asylum if he, or any visitors, breach or are perceived to breach, any of the 28

'rules' in the protocol. The 'protocol' forbids Julian from undertaking journalism and expressing his opinions, under threat of losing his asylum. The rules also state that the embassy can seize Julian's property or his visitors' property and hand these to the UK police, and report visitors to the UK authorities. The protocol also requires visitors to provide the IMEI codes and serial numbers of electronic devices used inside the embassy, and states that this private information may be shared with undisclosed agencies."

The protocol does not spell out all the restrictions imposed on Assange and his supporters over the last year. A bombshell report by [Cassandra Fairbanks](#) on Tuesday revealed Ecuador's demand that Assange and his lawyer be scanned before entering a "highly bugged and monitored" conference room with a journalist.

Describing her experience, Fairbanks said she had been: "Locked in a cold, surveilled room for over an hour by Ecuadorian officials, as a furious argument raged between the country's ambassador and Julian Assange."

The argument reportedly centered on Assange's refusal to submit to a body scan in order to enter the conference room, where Fairbanks waited. Fairbanks [reported](#) that Assange shouted at the Ecuadorian ambassador, accusing the latter of acting as an agent of the United States government. The ambassador then told Assange to "shut up," she reported.

WikiLeaks, writing via social media, has [confirmed](#) the "factual elements" of Fairbanks' story.

Subject to Body Scans

Assange and his lawyers are now subjected to body scans in addition to conditions that, in the opinion of Ecuador's former President [Rafael Correa](#), already amounted to torture. In his argument with the ambassador, Assange protested that he was being treated like "a prisoner" and not a political asylee.

Assange's supporters have claimed that rather than risk a public-relations fallout by removing Assange from the embassy by force, the U.S., UK and Ecuador are acting to hasten Assange's physical and mental demise in hopes he will be forced to leave the embassy or become incapacitated.

WikiLeaks' new Editor-in-Chief Kristinn Hrafnsson told *RT* in a [televised interview](#): "We, of course, know that Lenin Moreno in Ecuador is willing to sacrifice Julian Assange for debt relief, that was reported by *The New York Times* in early December."

The [Courage Foundation](#) summarized Assange's plight:

"Julian Assange is the only publisher and journalist in the EU formally found to be arbitrarily detained by the UN human rights system. He is in dire circumstances, faces imminent termination of his asylum, extradition and life in a US prison for publishing the truth about US wars, and has been gagged and isolated since 28 March 2018. He has been kept in the UK from his young family in France for eight years (where he lived before being arbitrarily detained in the UK), has not seen the sun for almost seven years, and has been found by the United Nations to be

subjected to “cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.”

On Thursday Ecuador’s foreign minister threatened additional “‘firm and sustained’ measures against Assange after [@WikiLeaks](#) reports on the [@INAPapers](#) offshore scandal involving the president and his brother,” [WikiLeaks tweeted](#).

Since Assange was cut off from the outside world, efforts by the United States to prosecute Assange and *WikiLeaks* have been exposed. That Assange had already been charged was inadvertently [revealed](#) by a cut-and-paste error by the U.S. attorney’s office of the Eastern District of Virginia. The [prosecution](#) of the publisher pertains to *WikiLeaks*’ Chelsea Manning-era publications, and possibly Vault 7, not to the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

Manning Back in Jail

Thursday also marks the passage of Manning’s third week of imprisonment for her refusal to testify before a grand jury convened to prosecute *WikiLeaks* and Assange. Since being jailed, Manning’s supporters have [reported](#) that she has been kept in solitary confinement, where she will remain indefinitely until either the grand jury is disbanded or she agrees to testify without legal counsel and under a veil of secrecy.

Presumably, prosecutors hope to coerce Manning to backtrack on her testimony during her court-martial in 2013, in which she testified she acted alone, and instead indicate that Assange worked to incite or aid her in retrieving leaked material. Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist [Chris Hedges](#) described the situation as “the new inquisition.”

The end of the collusion conspiracy theory came as a victory for Assange and WikiLeaks. Special Counsel Robert Mueller made it clear there would be no indictments against either for their roles during the 2016 election.

However, the damage has been significant, with Assange unable to comment and WikiLeaks saddled with residual, unresolved smears. Over the last three years, cable news pundits endlessly vilified *WikiLeaks* and Assange by claiming the publisher coordinated with the Trump presidential campaign and became an instrument of the Kremlin in 2016.

Meanwhile, *The Guardian* has allowed its outlandish story alleging that secret meetings took place between Assange and Paul Manafort in Ecuador's London embassy three times between 2013 and 2016 to go un-retracted and unexplained. WikiLeaks has called the story "an intentional front page fabrication," and launched a Gofundme campaign to raise funds to sue the newspaper. Hrafnsson confirmed the lawsuit is progressing.

On March 28 last year, friends and supporters of Assange spontaneously came together on hearing the news that he had been cut off from the outside world by the Ecuadorian government. For more than 10 hours, participants and viewers from across the planet raised their voices to protest the injustice of Assange having been gagged.

The initial "Reconnect Julian" event led to subsequent "Unity4J" vigils. Over the past 12 months, demonstrations of support have unfolded across the globe, including many events organized by the Socialist Equality Party and a plethora of unaffiliated actions in solidarity with Assange.

The *WikiLeaks* founder's mother, Christine Assange, wrote via [social media](#): "At critical times throughout history, leaders have emerged to lead the fight for freedom. They risk their lives and liberty to do so. Most of us don't have their courage, but we can unite to protect them. [#FreeAssange](#) [#FreeManning](#)"

Earlier Thursday, [trucks](#) emblazoned with supportive messages for Assange and Manning appeared in [London](#) and [Washington, D.C.](#)

Elizabeth Vos is a freelance journalist and contributor to Consortium News.

If you value this original article, please consider [making a donation](#) to *Consortium News* so we can bring you more stories like this one.

Assange Lawyers File Petition to Get US to Reveal Charges and Stop Ecuador From Extraditing Him

Lawyers for the WikiLeaks publisher want the OAS independent body to keep Assange from being sent to a courtroom in the U.S. and to end his isolation.

By Joe Lauria

Special to Consortium News

Julian Assange's lawyers have filed an urgent petition to the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (IACHR) to stop Ecuador from extraditing him to the United States and to pressure the U.S. to reveal its sealed charges against

the WikiLeaks publisher, WikiLeaks said on Wednesday.

His lawyers also applied to the IACHR to get Ecuador to end its surveillance of Assange and “to stop the isolation imposed on him,” according to the 1,172-page filing.

“The application by Mr. Assange’s lawyers identifies a raft of legal obligations that the U.S. and Ecuador are flouting in their treatment of Mr. Assange,” WikiLeaks said in a statement. “The lawyers document Trump Administration attempts to pressure Ecuador to hand over Mr. Assange, notably recent serious overt threats against Ecuador made by senior U.S. political figures, unlike the more veiled threats made in the past.”

The IACHR is an autonomous part of the Organization of American States (OAS) to promote and protect human rights. Its decisions are not legally binding on OAS member states. But it can create political embarrassment for states that are found to have committed human rights violations.

“The calls to extradite Mr. Assange to the United States, as the result of his work as a publisher and editor, is the reason Mr. Assange obtained political asylum at Ecuador’s embassy in London in August 2012,” WikiLeaks said.

Baltasar Garzón, the international coordinator of Assange’s legal team, called for “international solidarity for this case in which the right to access and impart information freely is in jeopardy,” the statement said.

A decision whether to unseal the details of an indictment against Assange is held up in a courtroom in Alexandria, Virginia. In November, Judge Leonie Brinkema delayed her decision for what she said would be a week.

The WikiLeaks petition to the IACHR also “reveals for the first time that U.S. federal prosecutors have in the last few months

formally approached people in the United States, Germany and Iceland and pressed them to testify against Mr. Assange in return for immunity from prosecution,” the WikiLeaks statement said.

“Those approached are associated with WikiLeaks’ joint publications with other media about U.S. diplomacy, Guantanamo bay and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan,” said the statement.

The Trump administration “is clearly intent on using the prosecution of Julian Assange as an ‘icebreaker’ to set a dangerous precedent that would enable the prosecution of most serious media organizations,” according to WikiLeaks. It added that the threats against Assange have “significantly increased” since WikiLeaks published the “Vault 7” CIA documents, “the largest leak of CIA classified information in history.”

The petition points out espionage activity against Assange in the embassy by private security firms contracted by Ecuador “which, instead of being involved in protecting the asylee, have spied on Mr. Assange and his visitors.” The private firms have been acting as informants to the FBI, WikiLeaks said, citing media reports.

“Ecuador is required to end the regime of isolation imposed on Mr. Assange, suspending the application of the so-called special protocol and guaranteeing his rights as an asylee will be respected in full,” the filing said.

Joe Lauria is editor-in-chief of Consortium News and a former correspondent for *The Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *Sunday Times* of London and numerous other newspapers. He can be reached at joelauria@consortiumnews.com and followed on Twitter [@unjoe](https://twitter.com/unjoe) .

VIDEO: Pilger Says Assange Denies Meeting Manafort

The Guardian has claimed Paul Manafort visited Julian Assange at the Ecuador embassy. John Pilger visited Assange and tells CN's Joe Lauria Assange strongly denied any such meeting.

Pilger: 'Julian is a touchstone for opposition'

By Joe Lauria

Special to Consortium News

WikiLeaks publisher Julian Assange has vehemently denied that he ever met Donald Trump's former campaign manager, according to journalist and filmmaker John Pilger, who met with Assange at Ecuador's embassy in London last week.

Pilger said Assange told him the story published by *The Guardian* on Nov. 27 was a "total fabrication." Pilger told **Consortium News** in an interview for the Unity4J vigil on Friday that "I personally can confirm that did not happen. He said it was a fabrication. It was not possible. The way internal security works at that embassy, it was not possible."

Pilger called *The Guardian* story "an indication of a kind of degradation of the media today and especially of the 'respectable' media. We discussed that a great deal."

Pilger said Assange had been the target of attacks "over the

years” that have come “thick and fast.” He said: “And for one man to cope with them is an extraordinary feat. Only occasionally does he express anger—he does it as anyone of us would feel—say on an attack like *The Guardian*’s utterly false story.”

First Visit Since March

Pilger had not visited Assange since before March, when the Ecuadorian government imposed a ban on his internet and phone connection, and limited visitors to his lawyers and family members.

Pilger’s impression on seeing him again is that Assange has lost no sharpness of mind after more than six years confined to a small space in the embassy, and now nine months cut off from the outside world.

“He’s in very good spirits,” Pilger said. “The extraordinary resilience of this man is something to behold. In his own personality, intellectually he is Julian.”

“I can’t say what he’s feeling. His health is probably holding steady but he urgently needs comprehensive diagnostic work done,” said Pilger.

“But people should know that Julian’s spirits, his whole sense of ‘to hell with them,’ and his own resolve to stand up to those who would want to do a great injustice to him is undiminished,” he said. “He’s not leaving, they will have to throw him out. He’s not going anywhere.”

The United States government has admitted that it has indicted Assange for publishing classified documents that revealed apparent U.S. war crimes and corruption. Assange

fears that if he leaves the embassy British authorities would arrest him on bail skipping charges and then extradite him to the U.S. for prosecution.

Touchstone of Opposition

Pilger said *The Guardian* story was the best example he could think of that expresses today's Cold War. "I've never known it to be as explicit as it is now. And that fabricated *Guardian* story ... is an example of that."

He said: "In the first Cold War there was an opposition in those days. There isn't a popular opposition now. The so-called liberal opposition is so confused, so disorientated, and so, almost wretched, in its uncertainty of its true allegiances, in its collusion, that there isn't a major anti-war movement."

"In many ways, Julian is a touchstone for opposition to so much of what is happening in our world," said Pilger. "Of all the cases that illustrate resistance to that, there is none like that of Julian Assange."

"And he needs public, popular support. He needs people to go into the street outside the embassy. To go in the streets all over the world, as they have done in the past," Pilger said.

You can watch the entire, original video of the 20 minute interview with John Pilger here:

The Fate of Julian Assange: Chris Hedges Interviews Consortium News Editor-in-Chief Joe Lauria

On his program “On Contact,” journalist and author Chris Hedges interviews Joe Lauria, CN editor, on the moves to prosecute Julian Assange using the Espionage Act; the media’s cravenness and the latest on Assange’s condition in London.

The West is Failing Julian Assange

While media focused on Julian Assange’s cat rather than his continuing arbitrary detention, evidence shows Britain worked hard to force his extradition to Sweden where Assange feared he’d be turned over to the U.S., as Stefania Maurizi explains.

By Stefania Maurizi

Special to Consortium News

Let’s start with the cat. You never would have thought one of these beloved felines would play a crucial role in the Julian Assange case, would you?

And yet look at the latest press coverage. The mainstream media’s headlines weren’t about a man who has been confined to a tiny building in the heart of Europe for the last six years with no end insight, they were about orders from Quito to feed his cat.

There you have a man who is at serious risk of being

arrested by the UK authorities, extradited to the U.S. and prosecuted for his publications. A man who has been cut off from any human contact, with the exception of his lawyers. A man whose health is seriously declining due to prolonged confinement without even an hour outdoors. Wasn't there anything more serious to cover than the cat?

But there's a story to be told behind Assange's cat. One of the last times I was allowed to visit Julian Assange in the Ecuadorian embassy in London, before the current government of Lenin Moreno cut off all his social and professional contacts, I asked the founder of WikiLeaks whether his cat had ever tried to escape from the embassy given that, unlike his human companion, he can easily sneak out of the building without the risk of being arrested by Scotland Yard.



Assange didn't take my question with the lightness with which it was intended, quite the opposite, he became a bit

emotional and told me that when the cat was small, it had in fact made some attempts to escape from the building, but as it had grown, it had become so accustomed to confinement that whenever Assange had tried to give the cat to some close friends so the animal could enjoy its freedom, it showed fear of wide open spaces. Confinement has a deep impact on the behavior and health of all creatures, animal and human.

Strength

I have worked as a WikiLeaks media partner for the last nine years, and over these nine years I have met Assange many, many times, but only once did I meet him as a free man: that was back in September 2010, the very same day the Swedish prosecutor issued an arrest warrant for allegations of rape. Initially he was under house arrest with an electronic bracelet around his ankle, then he entered the Ecuadorian embassy in London on June 19, 2012. Since then he has remained buried in that tiny embassy: a depressing building, very small, with no sunlight, no fresh air, no hour outdoors. In my country, Italy, even mafia bosses who strangled a child and dissolved his corpse in a barrel of acid enjoy an hour outdoors. Assange doesn't.

Mr Justice 10
Hull 12

My Marianne

From: Giles Paul
Skype ID: Item 13 January 2011 16:24
To: Lorraine Oia
Re: My Marianne
From: Assange
Outgoing file: Assange Prosecution Skeleton Argument.pdf

Dear Oia and Marianne

I attach an electronic version of the defence's skeleton argument, which I have now been able to obtain. I thought you may wish to consider the contents now and to see the general issues which are being raised. Obviously I am still awaiting details of the defence experts' evidence. These statements are overdue and I understand should be sent to me by next Thursday.

I will be writing further to you (sometime) to deal with the various miscellaneous points and issues which have arisen and, in particular, with the specific points which were raised by Oia during a recent telephone discussion.

Hopefully many of the prosecutors can be dealt with quite easily and quickly.

The defence has published its skeleton arguments (as attached). I confirm that I have NOT done so with the prosecution documents and do not intend to do so.

The defence has also sent a bundle of various documents to me but none is really new or needs your detailed consideration. I will send on any which may be of interest to you.

I am sorry to be dealing with the issues on a piecemeal basis. It is simply amazing how much work this case is generating. It sometimes seems like an industry. It is certainly non-stop. Please do not think that the case is being dealt with as just another extradition request.

Kind Regards,
Paul

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Activity and use of CPS Connect systems, the Government Secure Intranet, and the Criminal Justice Extranet is monitored to secure their effective operation and for other lawful business purposes. Communications using these systems will also be monitored and may be recorded to secure effective operation and for other lawful business purposes.

In these last eight years, I have never heard Julian Assange complain even once: at least in my presence, he has always reacted to the enormous stress he has been under with strength and whenever I have contacted his mother, Christine Assange, she has never wished to discuss the details of her personal feelings and concerns about the conditions of her son.

But for all his strength, this harsh situation is seriously undermining Assange's physical and mental health. In an op-ed in *The Guardian* last January, three respected physicians, Sondra S. Crosby, Chris Chisholm and Sean Love, tried to draw attention to this problem, yet nothing has changed. Assange remains buried in the embassy in extremely precarious conditions due to the complete lack of cooperation from the UK authorities which have always refused to offer him safe passage to enjoy his asylum in Ecuador.

This lack of cooperation from the UK authorities – which can be reasonably interpreted as a deliberate effort to make Assange feel helpless, to break him down, so he'll step out of the embassy and they can arrest him – has helped create this Catch-22 situation, with Ecuador attempting various options to find a solution, like giving Assange diplomatic status so he can leave the embassy protected by diplomatic immunity. But at the end of the day there is very little a small country like Ecuador can do, and with Lenin Moreno in power, Ecuador's interest in protecting Assange seems to be fading to the extent that Ecuador is considering stripping Assange of his Ecuadorian citizenship, one of the most important shields protecting the WikiLeaks founder from extradition to the U.S..

The UK's Special Inter

07/11/2011 - 11
Paul's Day

To: **Marianne**

From: **Clive Paul**
Sent: **Jan 25 (Sun) 2011 07:30**
To: **Löfgrén Ola**
Cc: **Ny Marianne**
Subject: **FW: THE EXTRADITION OF JULIAN ASSANGE TO SWEDEN ** UFGA/E ** 1 of 2**

Dear Ola,

I have been waiting patiently for the outstanding defence documents, which are not long overdue, before sending a substantive reply and advice to you. I had hoped to set out all the details and the requests for any further information in one document.

The defence has said it will send the pending documents to me by tomorrow (Wednesday). I will of course contact you as soon as the documents do so.

My earlier advice remains, that in my view it would not be prudent for the Swedish authorities to try to interview the defendant in the UK. Such an interview would need to be pursuant to a letter of request (as it is an attempt to gather evidence rather than an exercise merely to obtain information or intelligence). Even if the defendant was to consent to such an interview (by appointment) on a mutually agreed basis, the defence would without any doubt seek to turn the event to its advantage.

It would inevitably stage it was conclusive proof that the Swedish authorities had no case whatsoever against him and hence the interview was in the hope that he would make a full and frank confession. He would of course have no obligation (under English law) to answer any questions put to him. Any attempt to interview him under strict Swedish law would inevitably be fraught with problems.

General experience has also shown that attempts by foreign authorities to interview a defendant in the UK, frequently leads to the defence asserting that some inducements or threats were made by the interviewers (such as the prosecutors' approach to bail on the defendant's surrender to the foreign state). Thus I suggest you interview him only on his surrender to Sweden and in accordance with Swedish law.

As we have discussed your prosecution is well based on the existing evidence and is sufficient to proceed to trial, which is the prosecution's intention.

You have the evidence of the complainants.

We may need to put our response to the basic points raised by the defence on a clear, simple footing. These are essentially that Marianne Ny can issue a European Arrest Warrant and the Swedish authorities actually will do want to prosecute the defendant for the Swedish offences set out in the EAW.

I will scan a letter just received from the defence solicitors, to you very shortly. I will send a further substantive advice following receipt of the outstanding defence documents. I will also advise as to the format and content of any Swedish response. Hopefully we can, as I have mentioned, try to use one comprehensive response to deal with all the issues.

Kind Regards,
Paul.

From: **Löfgrén Ola** [mailto:...]
Sent: **23 January 2011 03:13**
To: **Clive Paul**

Having spent the last 3 years fighting in four jurisdictions – Sweden, the UK, Australia and the U.S. – to access the full documentation on the Assange and WikiLeaks case under FOIA, I have acquired a few documents which leave no doubt as to the role played by UK authorities in contributing to create the legal and diplomatic quagmire which is keeping Assange confined to the embassy. Why have the UK authorities done this? What special interest, if any, do they have in the Assange case?

I mention a “special interest” because documents reveal that

from the very beginning of the Swedish case, the UK authorities advised the Swedish prosecutors against the only investigative strategy that could have led to a quick solution of the preliminary investigation against Assange: questioning the WikiLeaks founder in London rather than extraditing him to Stockholm. It was this decision to insist on extradition at all costs that led the Australian to take refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy, fighting tooth and nail, convinced that if extradited to Sweden he could end up extradited to the U.S.

Documents reveal that the UK authorities referred to the Assange case as not an ordinary one from the very beginning. "Please do not think that the case is being dealt with as just another extradition request," they wrote on January 13, 2011 to the Swedish prosecutors. A few months later, a UK official added: "I do not believe anything like this has ever happened, either in terms of speed or in the informal nature of the procedures. I suppose this case never ceases to amaze." What is special about this case? And why did the UK authorities keep insisting on extradition at all costs?

At some point even the Swedish prosecutors seemed to express doubts about the legal strategy advocated by their UK counterpart. Emails between UK and Swedish authorities I have obtained under FOIA show that in 2013 Sweden was ready to withdraw the European Arrest Warrant in light of the judicial and diplomatic paralysis the request for extradition had created. But the UK did not agree with lifting the arrest warrant: the legal case dragged on for another four years, when finally on the May 19, 2017, Sweden dropped its investigation after Swedish prosecutors had

questioned Assange in London, as he had always asked.

Although the Swedish probe was ultimately terminated, Assange remains confined. No matter that the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention established that the WikiLeaks founder has been arbitrarily detained since 2010, and that he should be freed and compensated. The UK, which encourages other states to respect international law, doesn't care about the decision by this UN body whose opinions are respected by the European Court of Human Rights. After trying to appeal the UN decision and losing the appeal, Britain is simply ignoring it. There is no end in sight to Assange's arbitrary detention.

Silence and Suspicion

From: My Marianne [Marianne.Hy@btopenworld]
Sent: 14 December 2011 18:43
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: re JULIAN ASSANGE

Thanks, I am glad to hear everything is alright. I am not surprised that it is a constant work. I hope the holidays will give you a well-deserved break. I will be off duty next week but Kari and Ole will be on duty and we will keep in touch. Just quite excited to see what will happen next Monday. If needed I will get back to office and please don't hesitate to call me or send email to my private address [REDACTED]
Marianne

From: [REDACTED] [pops@pop.com.uk]
Received: Mon 13 December 2011 19:30
MIM: My Marianne
Address re JULIAN ASSANGE

Marianne,
No problem, just to say hello and that all is in hand. This should be a fairly quiet time on Assange but amazingly it is simply normal work.

I am still waiting for the evidence application to the Supreme Court for leave to appeal. This must be made by close of play next Monday. I have been trying to ensure the defence serve me with details as soon as possible and do not leave it to the last moment, with the intention of ensuring I cannot respond in time and to ensuring the matter is not determined by the court next week into next year.

Suffice it to say I have been rather busy trying to outwit the defence and to spoil their plans. They may still have the last say in that if they do delay then there is nothing I can do to stop them. (The Extradition Act 2003 gives them 14 days). I can though suggest subtly that such an act grossly discourtesy to the Supreme Court may put them, their counsel and their case in a rather poor light with the court.

[REDACTED]

What I can say is that following the most extensive contact with the Supreme Court I has confirmed that the Justices will sit next Monday or more accurately, will decide the application that day and also announce its decision (probably at about 9 pm GMT). This will involve the justices working from various locations on Monday and their decision will be given by telephone.

I do not believe anything like this has ever happened, either in terms of speed or in the informal nature of the procedure. I suppose this case never ceases to amaze.

If leave is given then the court will set the appeal for hearing before the full court on 1 and 2 February 2012. Again, the speed and approach by the court are simply unheard of and that is why I am doing everything possible to ensure we can get the report to decide the question of leave on Monday.

If leave is refused then he will try to get interim relief from Strasbourg. It normally decides within 14 days. However with the Christmas/New Year break it is not possible to say how soon it will respond. I will keep you posted.

[REDACTED]

There are two more suspicious elements: the fact that the UK authorities destroyed the emails regarding the Assange case, as they admitted in my litigation before the UK Tribunal, and the fact that they have always refused to provide me with any information as to whether they have communicated with the U.S. authorities on the Assange case,

because they sustain that confirming or denying it would tip Assange off as to the existence or non of an extradition request from the U.S..

If there is or will be an extradition request from the U.S., the UK authorities want to be able to extradite Julian Assange for his publications just like any other criminal.

The risk of an editor or publisher being extradited for his publications should raise red flags and public debate in our democratic societies, yet we don't see any debate at all.

Julian Assange's situation is very precarious. His living conditions within the embassy have become unsustainable, and his friends speak as if there is no hope: "When the U.S. gets Julian", they say, as if it is a foregone conclusion that the U.S. will get him and no journalist, no media, no NGO, no press association will do anything to prevent it.

In the last six years that Assange has been languishing in the embassy, not a single major Western media has dared to say: we shouldn't keep an individual confined with no end in sight. This treatment of Julian Assange by the UK – and, more in general, by the West – is not only inhumane, but counterproductive.

In these years, the Russian state-funded network RT has continued to cover the Assange case intensely. It isn't hard to understand why Russia is so ecstatic about the Assange case. The case provides Russia with the evidence to affirm that while the West is always preaching freedom of the press and aggressive journalism, it in fact crushes journalists and journalistic sources who expose state abuse at the highest levels. Chelsea Manning spent seven years in prison, Edward Snowden was forced to leave his country and seek asylum in Russia, Julian Assange has spent the last six years confined to a tiny building and in seriously deteriorating health. It's time to stop this persecution.

Stefania Maurizi works for the Italian daily La Repubblica as an investigative journalist, after ten years working for the Italian newsmagazine *l'Espresso*. She has worked on all WikiLeaks releases of secret documents, and partnered with Glenn Greenwald to reveal the Snowden files about Italy. She has also interviewed A.Q. Khan, the father

of the Pakistani atomic bomb, revealed the condolence payment agreement between the US government and the family of the Italian aid worker Giovanni Lo Porto killed in a US drone strike, and investigated the harsh working conditions of Pakistani workers in a major Italian garment factory in Karachi. She has started a multi-jurisdictional FOIA litigation effort to defend the right of the press to access the full set of documents on the Julian Assange and WikiLeaks case. She authored two books: *Dossier WikiLeaks*, *Segreti Italiani* and *Una Bomba, Dieci Storie*, the latter translated into Japanese. She can be reached at stefania.maurizi@riseup.net

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