
Swedish Court Upholds Assange Arrest Warrant

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WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange has been in the Ecuadorean embassy since 2012 out of fear being extradited to the United States if arrested by Sweden.

A Swedish appeals court decided to uphold the arrest warrant for WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on Friday, prolonging the six year long legal stand off with prosecutors and clearing the way for the Wikileaks founder to be questioned in London next month.

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Assange, 45, is wanted by Swedish authorities for questioning over allegations, which he denies, that he committed rape in 2010.

The founder of WikiLeaks has been living in the Ecuadorean Embassy in London for more than four years after Swedish investigators issued a European arrest warrant for him in 2012, which required British police to detain Assange and extradite him.

A United Nations working group found in February that Assange was subject to arbitrary detention at the embassy. His lawyers then sought to throw out the warrant in Sweden in May but a judge upheld it saying "probable cause for suspicion" remained valid against Assange.

Lawyers then appealed the decision in August and but the court has now upheld the judge's ruling.

"The Court of Appeal shares the assessment of the District Court that Julian Assange is still suspected on probable cause of rape," the court said.

Per Samuelson, a Swedish lawyer representing Assange, said he had not yet talked to his client.

"I assume we will appeal, it would be strange if we did not," he said.

The court said the lengthy deadlock and the previous passivity of Swedish prosecutors in pursuing the investigation were arguments for setting aside the warrant, but there remained a strong public interest argument for it remaining in place.

Assange denies the 2010 rape allegations against him, however, he fears that being sent to Sweden would allow the United States to request his extradition to face charges for publicizing U.S. diplomatic cables and other documents from Whistleblower Chelsea Manning published on WikiLeaks.

Ahead of the decision, Assange offered to turn himself over to Washington and serve a prison sentence if President Barack Obama pardons Chelsea Manning.

"If Obama grants Manning clemency, Assange will agree to US prison in exchange -- despite its clear unlawfulness," WikiLeaks tweeted Thursday.

The ruling came few days after Ecuador set Oct. 17 as the date for the questioning of Assange in its London embassy. Swedish prosecutors have said the questioning will be conducted by an Ecuadorean prosecutor, in the presence of Swedish chief prosecutor Ingrid Isgren and a police investigator.
