

# *Norway Won't Let Edward Snowden Come to Accept Free Speech Award*

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Oslo, October 8 (RHC)-- A Norwegian appeals court rejected a lawsuit from famed whistleblower Edward Snowden against the Norwegian government, denying him free passage to the country to accept a free speech award. The court upheld the verdict of the lower Oslo District Court, which dismissed the case in June.

"The court of appeal has -- like the district court -- concluded that the lawsuit must be rejected," it said, adding that the justice ministry could not be compelled to issue an advance decision on whether or not to extradite.

Snowden, a former National Security Agency contractor who leaked details about the U.S. government's massive surveillance programs, was granted asylum in Russia, which borders Norway, after fleeing the United States in 2013. Many around the world see him as a whistleblower who boldly exposed government excess. But the U.S. government has filed espionage charges against him for leaking intelligence information.

Snowden had been invited to Norway to receive an award from the local branch of writers' group PEN International, but worried that he would be handed over to the United States, his lawyers have said. "Sadly, this was not entirely unexpected," chairman William Nygaard of PEN Norway told Reuters. "We will of course appeal to the Supreme Court."

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