

# *Former Ecuadorean foreign minister says Assange arrest shows Moreno is CIA asset*

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Quito, April 22 (RHC)-- The decision of Ecuador's government to terminate Julian Assange's asylum is "savagery" and has heavily damaged the dignity of the county, which caved in to the U.S. as if it was its "vassal," former Foreign Minister Ricardo Patiño told RT.

The former official, who is a vocal supporter of the WikiLeaks co-founder, believes the arrest of Assange has greatly damaged the image of Ecuador, its constitution, as well as the international law as a whole.

"This is an insult to the dignity of our country, it is lawlessness -- to allow the British police to enter our embassy and pull out the person we gave asylum to. And according to our constitution and international agreements, it is forbidden to extradite him. This is called the principle of non-refoulement," Patiño told RT Spanish in an exclusive interview.

Aside from that, he said Assange still holds Ecuadorian citizenship (currently "suspended" by the government). The country's laws explicitly prohibit handing over its citizens to be persecuted under foreign laws, Patino noted. The amount of violations is "savagery from a legal point of view," and Patino says it has clearly shown the country's president -- Lenin Moreno -- surrendered to the U.S. "as a vassal."

Patiño then accused the incumbent president of being a puppet of the CIA, tasked with destroying the legacy of his socialist predecessors. "All that Moreno does is an attempt to completely destroy what we

have built. Undoubtedly, it was planned and it was planned with the CIA involvement. He is not smart enough to come up with something like this, so it is staged by the U.S. Embassy,” Patino affirmed, adding that a CIA representative frequents presidential and government meetings, telling Ecuadorian leadership what to do.

This strong anti-government rhetoric has already landed Patiño in hot water. He was forced to flee the country as an investigation into his actions was launched earlier this week. The former official stands accused of anti-government activities and having “links” to a Swedish software developer Ola Bini. The latter was arrested in Ecuador last week on suspicions of “hacking” on WikiLeaks’ behalf.

Patiño himself says the persecution is a direct result of his criticism of Moreno’s government. “I am accused of giving a speech during a meeting of our political organization,” the former minister said. “I’ve called on our supporters to accompany the people, take to the streets, to state institutions and condemn the disastrous economic and social policy of the government of Lenin Moreno in Ecuador. Therefore, because of the dissent, because I gave a speech at a meeting, they want to arrest me.”

Assange’s asylum was suspended last week, after Moreno accused the journalist of spying on his family. WikiLeaks denied the claims, saying that Moreno seeks personal revenge over the recently surfaced corruption allegations against him. Assange was dragged out of the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he had lived for seven years, and now faces potential extradition to the United States, where he is accused of conspiring to crack a password with Chelsea Manning on a Department of Defense computer.

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