

WikiLeaks founder Assange remanded in custody after brief UK court hearing



London, October 12 (RHC)-- WikiLeaks' founder Julian Assange was remanded in custody on Friday after a brief hearing in a London court which will decide whether he should be extradited to the United States to face spying charges.

The 48-year-old Assange faces 18 counts in the U.S. including conspiring to hack government computers and violating an espionage law. He could spend decades in prison if convicted.

Appearing by video link from Belmarsh Prison in east London, Assange, bearded and wearing a purple sweatshirt, spoke only to confirm his name and age before he was remanded in prison until his next hearing later this month.

"I very much hope we can make some progress on this case," Judge Tam Ikram told him at the end of the five-minute hearing at London's Westminster Magistrates' Court.

Australian-born Assange came to prominence when WikiLeaks published hundreds of thousands of secret U.S. diplomatic cables in 2010, angering Washington which claimed he had put lives at risk. In

2012, he took refuge in Ecuador's London embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden, where he was accused of sex crimes which he denied, saying he believed he would ultimately be sent on to the United States.

He was dragged from the embassy in April after seven years and given a 50-week jail term for skipping bail. That sentence was completed last month but he remains in custody while his extradition case continues.

He is due to appear in court again, this time in person, on October 21st with the full extradition hearing due to start on February 25th next year.

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