

# *Legal experts call on UK to end Julian Assange's extradition trial*

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London, August 17 (RHC)-- More than 170 lawyers, judges and legal experts have called on the UK government to halt the process of extradition to the United States of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange and release him.

"We urge you to act in accordance with national and international law, human rights and the law, and to end the current extradition trial of Mr Assange, and to grant him the freedom that is long overdue," said the international organization 'Lawyers for Assange' in a letter to British authorities.

According to the group, the extradition of the Australian journalist, who has been held in a UK maximum security prison since his arrest at the Ecuadorian embassy in London in April 2019, would be illegal because the treaty signed by London and Washington prohibits extradition on political grounds.

They also warn that if Assange is extradited to the United States, he could be subjected to torture or inhuman and degrading treatment in that country.

The U.S. Department of Justice wants to prosecute the founder of Wikileaks for the publication of hundreds of thousands of secret files that exposed war crimes committed by U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, and classified information sent by its diplomats from dozens of countries.

The 18 criminal charges brought by Washington range from conspiracy to obtain and disseminate information about the U.S. national defense to computer hacking -- carrying a total sentence of 175 years in prison.

The extradition trial, which began last February, is due to resume September 7th in a London court, after nearly seven months of suspension due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last week, the U.S. prosecution officially informed the British judge in charge of the case that it will extend the criminal charges, so it is not ruled out that the defense will request a further postponement.

In the letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and the ministers of the interior, justice and foreign affairs, Lawyers for Assange warned the government that the extradition of the 49-year-old Australian journalist and editor would put press freedom in the UK at risk.

The group of international lawyers also believes that the founder of Wikileaks should be released immediately, having served a "disproportionate and irregular" sentence of 50 weeks in prison.

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