

Reporters without Borders denied visit with Julian Assange in UK prison



London, April 30 (RHC)-- Two journalists with the NGO Reporters without Borders were recently denied access to Julian Assange in a UK prison. A political prisoner being held in Belmarsh Prison in London, Assange was granted a visit duly authorized by prison authorities, but it was cancelled when the two arrived at the prison.

Reporters without Borders's Secretary General, Christophe Deloire, and its director of campaigns, Rebecca Vincent, tried to visit him in Belmarsh, but the prison authorities did not allow them in.

The Italian newspaper I Fatto Quotidiano spoke with Rebecca Vincent after their denial to visit Julian Assange.

"They said that they had "received intelligence" that we are journalists, and therefore would not be allowed in. We said "OK, there must be a misunderstanding. RSF is an NGO, we are here as an NGO, we are following the prison's rules, we are visiting him as any of his other visitors would." But they said the decision was taken by the prison governor and the only thing we could do was to write a complaint to an e-mail address they gave us. I asked, several times, 'could we speak to the prison governor? This is urgent, we would like to resolve this, we would like to visit him.' We were on the list, by the way, with Stella [Assange's wife], who came, and she did get in, but she wasn't there when all this happened, she got there a bit later. She was allowed in as normal, but we were supposed to go in together with her. Anyway, we tried many things on the spot to resolve the situation, but it wasn't possible, they wouldn't speak to us further about it.

"We did write an e-mail to the complaint address, an urgent one. We called Julian's lawyers, we tried several things. But it was early in the morning, and no one could reach the prison governor. At one point I went back to the same officials at the reception, and tried to ask again, and one of them said 'how can you say you're not a journalist when you are going out to speak to the media outside?' and I said 'that's a different thing!' Because we did send out a media advisory; we had organised for journalists to meet us outside the prison at 11.15 a.m., because we were going to be the first NGO to visit Julian in prison, and then we were going to comment to media. So maybe they got spooked by the fact that there were press outside after our visit. But there have been others who come out from their visits and speak to the media, so that isn't grounds to bar our access, in fact that's not legal. Nor does the fact that we are speaking to the media constitute evidence that we are journalists.

The whole purpose of this denial is to isolate him, to break him down and make him disappear from the radar of public opinion."

<https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/internacionales/321169-reporters-without-borders-denied-visit-with-julian-assange-in-uk-prison>



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